

The Barnes Foundation

Journal of the Art Department

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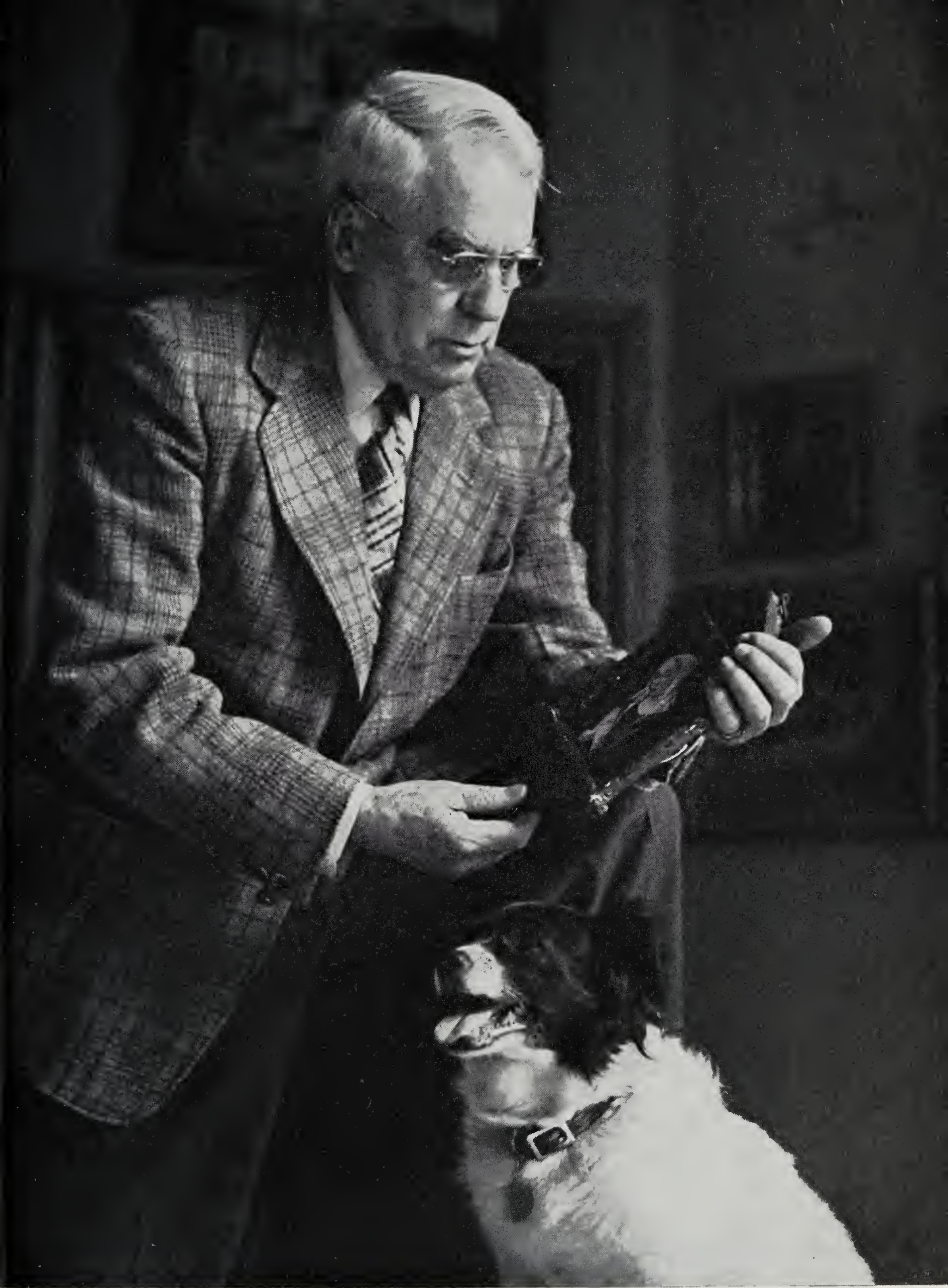
Journal of the Art Department

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The essays, etc., appearing in the issues of this JOURNAL will, for the most part, be derived from the work of seminar students, alumni, and members of the staff of the Foundation Art Department. On occasion, articles and pieces will be published not directly concerned with the Foundation's philosophy but representing original work by the Art Department's students and outside contributors which the editorial staff considers to be of general interest to the JOURNAL's readers. Publication occurs twice a year.

The Spring and Fall issues of the JOURNAL for 1972 commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the creation of the Barnes School and the one hundredth anniversary of the birth of its founder, Albert C. Barnes.



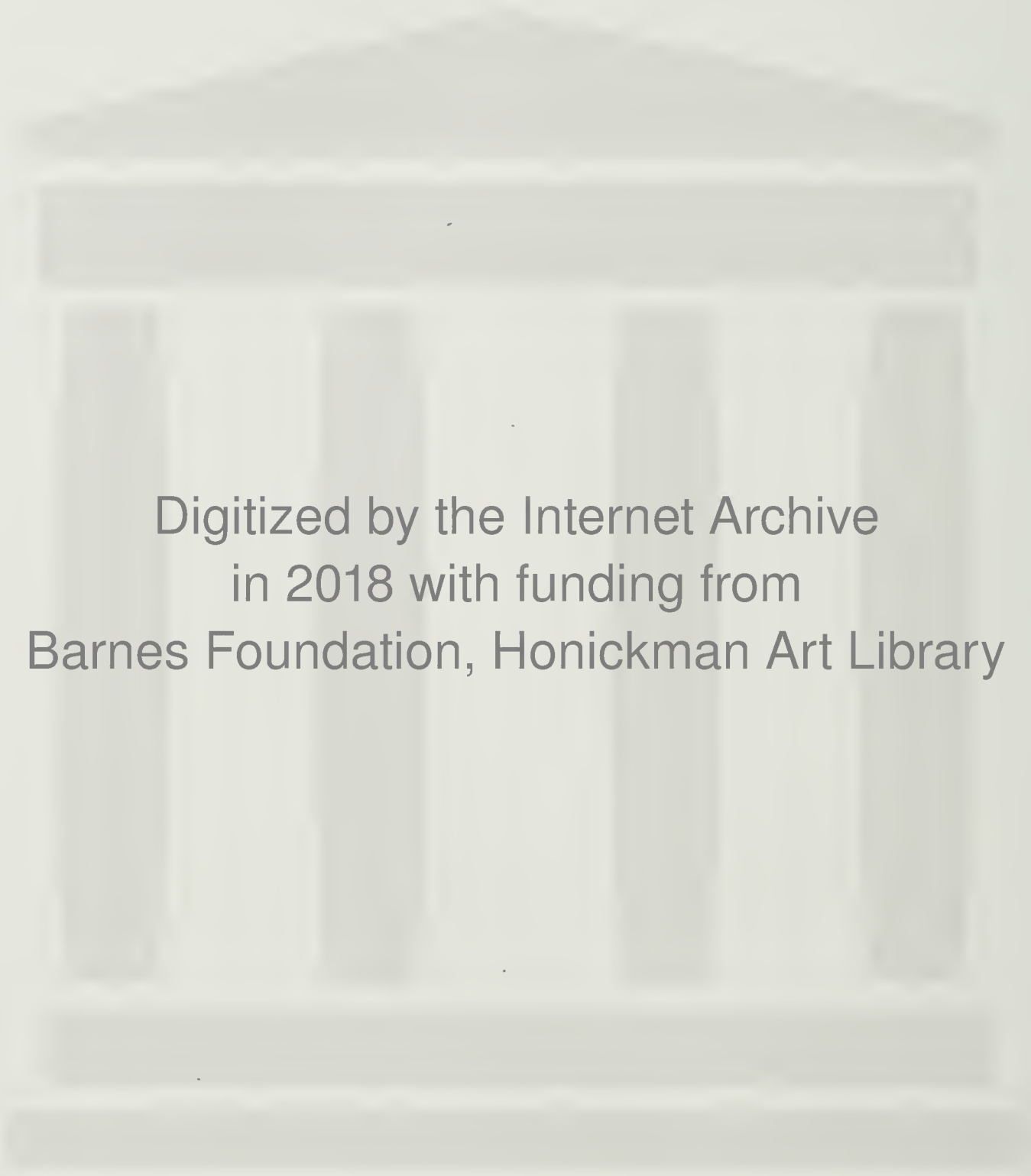
Dr Albert C. Barnes

1872—1951



The Art Department Teaching Staff: *Above:* Harry Sefarbi and Barton Church
Opposite: Violette de Mazia and Angelo Pinto





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JOURNAL *of* THE ART DEPARTMENT

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No. 1

Learning to See*

by VIOLETTE DE MAZIA†

I

A painting is a thing which is there for our eyes to register before it can begin to mean anything. Recognition of this self-evident truth, a truth virtually ignored by most of the so-called educators in art appreciation, is fundamental to a genuine understanding of a work of art as art, *i.e.*, as an expressive entity. Such understanding can result only from applying the principles of objectivity, the method of science, to the material at hand as it actually exists. Our topic in this essay will be to demonstrate how we may learn to see—to read and understand by way of the objective method—what in the work of the artist is significant when we consider it from the point of view of art.

There are a number of other viewpoints one may take about art, each valid for what it seeks and finds, yet having little or nothing to do with art as a medium of expression. Of those usually encountered, the major portion can be grouped under what might be called the historical approach, which encompasses most of the facts that have been gathered *about* the artist, his time and his career. Thus, in the case of

* Adapted from author's class lectures.

† Director of Education.

Cézanne, it would include such biographical information as his dates, his birthplace, his father's profession, his relationship with Emile Zola; it would also delve into psychological data in learned accounts of his neuroses. With Courbet and Daumier, it would cover such sociological phenomena, with various political ramifications, as their involvement in the French Revolution and Courbet's imprisonment in 1871. Of the works themselves, it would consider the subject of the painting, usually for the purpose of making a straightforward identification of who or what is portrayed or for the purpose of extracting from the subject its iconographical, mythological or allegorical significance.*

All of the above material serves as the common stock of the art programs of practically every major college and university. One doctoral candidate studying at Columbia University in New York described the institutional policy as consisting of nothing more than a fatuous game of irrelevant detection, in which the paintings themselves stood as "the scene of the crime" and other fields of study—history, psychology, literature, mythology, sociology, etc.—as the "motive": the explanation, accordingly, for such a painting as Goya's "Saturn Devouring his Children" lies, he was told, in the fact that none (or was it none but one?) of Goya's many children survived infancy; the existence, at the left edge of the canvas, of a leg of a male figure in a portrait by Delacroix indicates "Delacroix's doubts about his legitimacy" and was accounted significant for supporting the popular scholarly conjecture that Talleyrand rather than Monsieur Delacroix was his father. In addition to this fanciful type of speculation, he was informed of such facts as that Crucifixion scenes painted before the sixth century always illustrate Christ

* With the historical approach, the approach most frequently imposed upon the unwary student and museum visitor, an antique grandfather clock would be disposed of with specifications of the sort that it was made in the year such and such by David Rittenhouse, the renowned clock maker from Philadelphia—which is tantamount to informing us that the financial report of a banking enterprise was computed two days ago by Peter James McK. Buchanan, the senior accountant at the bank who hails from Grosse Pointe Park, Michigan. The reference to Rittenhouse and to the bank's senior accountant may assure us that the clock is well constructed and the report competently drawn up; it reveals nothing to satisfy our interest in the nature of the thing itself with which we are concerned.

with his wound on His left (or possibly right?) side and after that time invariably on His right (or possibly left?), except for those done in Ireland. The student was, of course, expected to know the proper side and the single exception if he hoped to earn a degree.

Art is also subject to varying sorts of technical analysis, the procedures of which are occasionally confused with determination of aesthetic merit. Among these are the study of the chemistry of paint and X-ray investigation, both of which are instrumental in the restoration and preservation of paintings and can be used in answering questions of age, authenticity, the medium used, and so forth; however, while these answers can dramatically affect the monetary value of a work, hence the seriousness with which the study is taken, they do not alter what is there to see. There is also the kind of research which may be directed towards discovering whether a painting is signed, its "provenance," *i.e.*, who has owned it, its date, and there are "experts" who, on the basis of documents and photographs, give attributions, though these may change with a frequency rivalling that of the telephone directory.

The technical approaches, again, are of interest and serve a purpose so long as they are seen for what they apply to. All too often, however, they are misused to supply the measure of art value: it commonly happens, for example, that a painting is considered "good" because it is shown to have been done in what is considered a "good" period of art, just as a work will also rise or fall in esteem according to how its subject satisfies the political or social attitudes of the current "lions" of the art world or according to the acceptableness of its subject to a specific group of critics. Likewise, "appreciation" quite frequently is determined by the name of the artist: an unsuccessful picture authenticated as being by Rembrandt will incite adulation merely for its being a Rembrandt, without the least regard for, or, indeed, insight into, what the picture itself says. Market value plays the same game with art value, the judgment of "greatness" flowing and ebbing with each corresponding shift of price, though the picture itself remains through it all the same as it always was.

Some of the viewpoints illustrated above may have had a bearing on what the artist did or on some of his motivation, and each may hold its own interest, its own legitimate application. Yet none is within the province of aesthetics, none provides the means to determine the art merit of the piece under consideration, and whoever limits his study of a work of art to one or another of these viewpoints and thinks that he has the tiger by the tail is due for a rude awakening.

Wherein the preceding approaches fail to answer for "the point of view of art" is, of course, in the fact that they are not about the work itself, and they supply nothing from which objective observation may derive an understanding of it as it exists. If, however, we were to attempt to analyze a painting for its aesthetic meaning—our example could be "Woman in Blue" (Plate 3) by Chaïm Soutine—and, ignoring what facts, etc., we have said to be irrelevant to our purpose, we took note of the canvas itself—the thick, slapped-on paint, the grotesquely distorted subject, and so forth—even then, embarking cold on an objective analysis with these observations and any others along this line, we could not get to know Soutine as an artist. In order to do that, we need to understand exactly what objectivity involves and may disclose, what we are, in fact, after, and wherein these two coincide; in short, we need to learn to see. To this end we shall establish and explore, first, the difference between knowledge *of* something and knowledge *about* it and, secondly, the meaning and importance of what we call relationships, both in perception in general and in the work of an artist.

II

The first step to take in learning to see a painting from the point of view of the art in it is that of recognizing what William James designates as the difference between knowledge *about* a thing and acquaintance with, or knowledge *of*, it. It is the former that such approaches as those listed above supply and the latter that is attained through application of the objective method. The problem is, as we illustrated, that the former type harbors a pretense of understanding, of

accounting for, the art merit of what it so thoroughly informs about, when in reality it represents "knowledge" of a work in the same slim meaning of knowing as, for example, our saying to Mrs Harris, "I saw Miss Brown at the library this morning; you know her, don't you?" and Mrs Harris' replying, "Oh, yes, she's that tall red-headed girl who lives in the next block and wears a plaid coat. The milkman told me she was born in Canada. Sure, I know Miss Brown!" This is not unlike the students we encounter who "know" our book *The Art in Painting* because they have seen it in its yellow cover lying on their roommate's desk. Suppose Miss Jones, who is also tall and red-headed, borrows Miss Brown's plaid coat and turns the corner at a time when Mrs Harris happens to be standing in her doorway. Mrs Harris might swear on the witness stand that she saw Miss Brown, since she "knows Miss Brown in that plaid coat anywhere." In the same way do people believe that they know Renoir by the red "coat" of color he wears in much of his late work, and, when Mary Cassatt borrows that "coat" and wears it thin, they cannot see the difference between her work and that of Renoir; nor can they see the difference of another kind between Renoir and the work of William Glackens, who borrowed Renoir's gently fleecy sort of outer garment and its pervasive color sensuousness; they fail to see Glackens' positive personality because they fail to see that Glackens relined the borrowed garment with his own color substance.*

Suppose, further, that Miss Brown buys a new coat, a plain blue one, and the milkman forgets to inform Mrs Harris of her purchase; when Miss Brown turns the corner this time, Mrs Harris will assert that it is not Miss Brown, it cannot be, for she *knows* her. A parallel to this can also be found in getting to know the work of Renoir: if all we have seen of Renoir is his red color "coat" or if we have learned about his red-dominated color scheme through reading and listening to lectures and from these we conclude we know Renoir, then when Renoir dons a blue "coat"—as in much of his work of the

* For a comparison of the work of Glackens and Renoir, see: V. de Mazia, "The Case of Glackens vs. Renoir," *The Barnes Foundation Journal of the Art Department*, Vol. II, No. 2, The Barnes Foundation Press, Merion, Pa. (Autumn, 1971), pp. 3-30.

1870's and some of the later periods—we will insist that it cannot be Renoir. The point is that our knowledge was not of *Renoir*, but only of the color “coat” he sometimes, even many times, wears; our knowledge was not of the substance inside the “coat” nor of the reasons for and the way of wearing the “coat,” be it blue or red. Similarly, if what we know of Matisse is only the fact that he uses bright colors, flat areas, grotesque distortions, things “out of drawing” (*e.g.*, Plate 5)—“facts” that critics and lecturers readily supply—his work is for us, as it is for many who have not learned to see but think to themselves that they have, just like what our little sister does (*e.g.*, Plate 6). Thomas Craven came to this conclusion and articulately passed it on to his readers.* Or if the childlike naïveté is all we see and “know” of Rousseau (Plate 7), Kane (Plate 15) and a nineteenth century French primitive (Plate 8), we cannot see their differences from a child's work or their differences from each other; and, therefore, we do not see, we do not *know*, what each is.

By the same reasoning, it is also true that we cannot come to genuine knowledge of the work of an artist from the hearsay evidence presented in a copy of it—a printed version, photograph or slide. At their best, reproductions always effect a thorough deception, and, indeed, one would be hard put to find two color prints or slides of the same picture even consistent with each other, let alone consistent with the artist's piece. Furthermore, it is frequently the case that as Miss Brown might dress up and put on a smile for the sake of having a pleasing photograph taken, so reproductions are “dressed up”—on Renoir's habitually rich, gently bright color scheme, for example, is superimposed a Matisse-like flash of vivid-

* What critics fail to see is that Matisse, in his distortions, indicates that he knows what, for instance, a whole nose is, from which he selected what he wanted; the child shows all he knows and believes that a nose is. Matisse shows, moreover, that he knows the traditions (the Coptic, the Byzantine, Japanese woodcut prints, the contributions of Manet, Cézanne, *et al.*), from which he likewise selected what he wanted, whereas the child reveals the fact that he is limited in such knowledge mainly to what he has observed in children's books and the work of other children. A Matisse picture may be childlike in its overall appearance; the child's is childish. (For a similar conclusion reached from an analogous comparison, see H. Sefarbi's “The Clue to Klee,” footnote, page 34, of this JOURNAL.)

ness; Cézanne has never been so charmingly blue nor the Venetians so excessively sumptuous as some prints insist—for the purpose of catching the unwary book purchaser's eye and pocketbook. Black-and-white reproductions are to be considered less misleading only because we are aware as we look that they are not like the picture, whereas color reproductions claim to offer what the original is. The black-and-white versions too, however, give lie to the character of the paintings they represent; for even at their best they cannot but reduce what is there to the terms of their own identity, which is self-evidently different from that of a painting: the black-and-white reproduction of Cézanne's "Peaches and Pears" (Plate 16) emphasizes a pattern of light and dark which in the original is subsidiary to that of the colors; the reproduction of Cézanne's "Flowerpiece" (Plate 2) appears more like an El Greco than a Cézanne; the reproduction of a Soutine landscape (Plate 1) makes of the painting a nondescript jumble. And, as to sizes, the reproduction of Cézanne's "Card Players" (Plate 14) indicates nothing of the original's monumentality.

Some people's "knowledge" of art, or of anything or anybody, forever stays at the level of our thus far knowing Miss Brown—*i.e.*, that of a superficial glimpse augmented by a modicum of hearsay evidence. This applies to the headline gleaners and to the majority of lecturers and writers on art, who take refuge in an overwhelming abundance of "facts" and an inconsequently imposing vocabulary to cover a sublime ignorance of the meaning of the artist's work as art.

Let us go further than noting Miss Brown's coat, listening to the milkman talk *about* her and observing the fact that she is tall and has red hair; now *we* talk with her, and now we have the chance to ascertain whether what the milkman told us is true. We discover a southern drawl and learn that she was born in Georgia. We may, moreover, find out her interests, her work, her thoughts, her feelings, her way of responding to things and ideas in her environment, even if only to her neighbor's cat, and it all leads us to know her in a manner that the plaid coat and red hair alone never will or can. In other words, we come to know the girl, as well as a picture or anything else, through our own experience of her,

of it, and we shall then know Miss Brown if she buys a new coat, dyes her hair another color, changes her address or any other circumstance that is *about* but not *of* her. Likewise, if we really know Renoir "dressed" in red, we shall know him "dressed" in blue, we shall know him from Mary Cassatt when she wears his "coat," and we shall be aware of the different ways of wearing the "coat" that he and Glackens have. The important thing in all the transactions between us and Miss Brown, between us and the work of the artist, between us and whatever we encounter, is that when we truly know Miss Brown, Renoir or anything we are then, and only then, entitled to judge; we may then approve or disapprove of Miss Brown, cut her off from our circle of acquaintances or encourage further friendship. All of this is, of course, a warning against passing judgment, forming an opinion, prematurely on what we do not yet know.

III

Now that we are aware of the difference between knowledge *about* and knowledge *of*, we are in a position to apply the objective method to the discovery of the art in art. To do so, we shall deal, of course, as we did in getting to know Miss Brown, with verifiable facts, facts of the picture itself. At this point, however, we should preclude any possible misinterpretation of objectivity to mean a mere registering, gathering and tabulating of fact after fact and indicate one fundamental consideration that the scientific, the intelligent, method entails. If we were to stand together before the Modigliani painting represented in Plate 4, we could all with equal objectivity account for what we saw on the area of the canvas—blue, brown, etc., color areas, various oval and angular shapes, areas of dark and areas of light, a rugged surface, a narrow dark band around the areas, slow curves as opposed to U-turns, parts of ovals, curves that are held in, taut, placed in sharp contrast to rectilinear elements, and so on. If we believe that taking stock in this way of what others can verify by their own observation is being objective, we are correct, at least as far as we have gone. But we should not

deceive ourselves that stock taking is enough, that it is all that is needed in order to be objective and to understand, to see a picture statement from the point of view of art.

To expand the idea, we shall for the moment concentrate on one unit, the lower center volume that says "peach" in the left half of Cézanne's "Peaches and Pears" (Plate 16). Allowing our eyes to function, and using the English vocabulary to label what we register, we can itemize the constituents that seem to make up that unit as red, yellow, grey-blue, a partial band-outline, patches, brushstrokes, etc., indicating that we "see," so we believe, what makes that unit what it is. That is simple indeed, child's play—as simple, one might say, as the proverbial ABC's. But let us see whether even the proverbially simple ABC's are really as simple as all that or whether something else is involved, is required from us, for coming to know, for being able to read, the significant identity of an ABC situation.

For the purpose, it would perhaps profit us to return briefly to the kindergarten level with a small collection of letters—D, G, I, O and T. These are like the colors on Cézanne's palette, and, as in the case of those colors which, because of what we know of such things, we are able to identify and label accurately, we can itemize those constituents of the alphabet. When, however, Cézanne *used* his colors to make the unit on the canvas, he ordered them for the purpose of expressing specific meanings, just as we now order the letters into DOIGT. Do we all get the new meaning of this organization? If we do, if we are able to read the French word "doigt" (dwah), meaning finger, it is because of two factors involved in applying the objective method over and above the necessary stock-taking inventory. The first is that we know the language in which the word is written: without knowing Arabic we cannot perceive the complete significance of the patterns of its lettering, though we may appreciate their decorativeness on a page of text; similarly, we must have a background in the language each speaks in order to read an ECG or an X-ray plate. Correspondingly, if we are to understand the Cézanne unit, we must acknowledge the fact that it is written in, it speaks, it communicates by way of, the artist-painter's language. If we fail to do this

and assess it from, for example, the photographer's viewpoint, we shall be stymied in our effort to see, unwittingly coming up with something equivalent to "doykt" instead of "dwah." And *we* then are to blame, not the artist, for the artist-painter does not speak the photographer's language any more than "doigt" is spoken in English.

The second factor vital to apprehending the meaning intended by the arrangement of the letters into the word "doigt" is our perceiving the separately itemized constituents as no longer separate, but in the order of their organization and, because of that and of our knowledge of the language in which that order has significance, how the constituents affect each other. It is then that we can perceive their all-important relationships—relationships that were established because and for the sake of the specific meaning intended; for example, the particular relationship between the letter "O" and the letter "I", the fact that they occur as "OI" and not as "IO", makes of each a contributing constituent of the French sound "wah"; and this relationship, which we perceive in the light of our relevant background, is the result of what the itemized letters do *to* each other—here, now—and do *with* each other because of *what* each one is and because of *where* it is in reference to the other. Simple enough about the ABC's it may seem, but perhaps we can recall our school days when it was not so easy.

We are now ready to carry the principle over to and further with the unit in Cézanne's painting. We have already spelled that unit partly out, but perhaps we should do so more fully: in it there are contrasts of colors; the patches are small; there are layers of paint, both thick and thin, which tend to overlap and pile up; the surface is rugged. On closer examination, we can note that the paint is thin in the shaded areas, thicker in the lighted ones and that there are extra top layers of more intense color near the center of the unit; in addition, both the light and the dark are made up of positive colors rather than of one color lightened and darkened. The boundary is not smoothly continuous, but broken, jagged, ragged; the patches within the area are also jagged and angular and together form a composite pattern as of a mosaic. We may further observe

that the majority of the patches are made up of individually perceptible touches of the brush—short strokes characterized by a sense of directness, made with a more or less even pressure of the brush, as evidenced by the relatively even width throughout their length.

We could go on in this vein, objectively taking apart the Cézanne unit, and, at the same time, giving a good demonstration of how the objective method begins to operate. Nevertheless, however important, however indispensable a survey of the constituents may be, it is only the first step, the barest starting point in applying the objective method to knowing the Cézanne “Peaches and Pears” or even to knowing the unit of the peach. As a matter of fact, all the above objectively observed material, and what we might further note to be within the unit, is not only *not* what makes up what Cézanne is, or Cézanne as represented in this still life, but it is not even all that is responsible for the identity of this particular unit. Let us see what happens to what we believed made it up when we isolate what we observed from the context of units which, as a part of their meaning, say “table,” “fruit,” etc., when we isolate it from other dark and light color shapes happening on the canvas with that unit and making up the painted area of which the unit is only a part (see Plate 17). Thus separated from its context, it no longer projects so positively as a volume, let alone as a peach or a Cézanne unit; indeed, it now resembles a unit we might be more likely to encounter in a Matisse, a Miró or a Klee. Obviously, by setting it apart we have isolated it from what contributes as much to its identity as all that is to be found within its boundary: we eliminated, for instance, the small grey-blue triangular areas surrounding it which, receding from it, push it forward and make it an important center of a star formation—a formation bestowing on it a character as different from that which it has by itself as that of a diamond in a sapphire setting in contrast to a diamond in the palm of one’s hand; likewise, alone it becomes something that it is not when seen with, and affected by, other spherical units—just as a chair by itself is a different chair, it has a different identity, from the same chair in a row of chairs; or the first star seen in a dark, starless sky is a different star

from one which participates in making up a distinctive pattern, such as the Great Bear constellation.

Now to carry the principle of relationships a step further, let us reconnect with our earlier kindergarten material and method. Taking the letter "O" and neither touching nor altering it, as Cézanne's unit was not physically tampered with, but changing the context, we can get such new sounds from it as those in "pop," "do," "do-re-mi," "door," "dour," "does"—each time playing tricks, as it were, on the unsuspecting "O" with not a fiber of its substance disturbed and each time getting another sound, another thing. It was affected by its context, and, therefore, it is no longer the same, all because, first, of what "O" is, of what language it is used in and, then, of where it is and what it is with and, as a result of this, what it does and is done unto.

Returning to the Cézanne unit, let us now look more fully into what it becomes, and what it therefore is, because of what it is with and the resulting action between it and that: we have seen its becoming a volume, a center of a star formation, a participant in a pattern of rounded shapes; we can, moreover, see something specific that belongs to it because of the part it plays in the actualization of a varied series of repetitions of a broad-band motif* and because of its contribution to a staccato-like light-and-dark contrast; it is also something it would not otherwise be because of its membership in a compact group of similar units—specifically, as one of a lower layer of volumes, more or less parallel to the plane of the area we would designate a plate, that holds a top layer up. This difference of identity between the unit functioning in context and isolated from it might be compared with that of an acrobat performing as one of a lower shelf of acrobats holding others on their shoulders in a pyramidal formation and that same acrobat as he takes a bow

* Starting with the broad, curving band of light that makes up the left side of the peach, we can follow throughout the canvas, as a major feature of its organization, the varied recurrence of this broad-band motif: it is stated in the left partition of the peach above our original peach and in the "echo" of that second peach unit by the cloth directly to its upper left; in the folds of the cloth at the far right; in the long facet of the horizontal edge of the tabletop and another along the right vertical edge of the table leg; in the rim of the plate, as well as elsewhere in more subtle renderings.

in front of the curtain, as the Cézanne unit "takes a bow," so to speak, away from its partners when we separate it out.

Equally important to the identity achieved through relationships as where the units are is the actual nature of the context. If, for instance, our acrobat were supporting life-sized paper dolls, he would not be the same as an acrobat supporting other acrobats; he would be a performer in a parody or a comic act rather than a performer in a feat of gymnastic skill. In the case of Cézanne's "Peaches and Pears," the unit under study supports not a bubble but a weighty volume. Furthermore, when we see that unit with, and therefore affected by, the right edge of the cloth at the lower left and the left edge of the table leg at the right, we are aware of its becoming, its being, a sort of keystone element of an angular arch—again, something it cannot be by itself. Likewise in context, its dark "highlight," a triangular bit of grey-blue color, works together with the knob on the table drawer and the indeterminate "doodad" at the upper right of the background to make it become not only part of a unifying motif but one of a set of punctuating accents that help to establish a forceful diagonal direction from lower left to upper right and to locate the entire still life in three-dimensional space.

Each of the above functions of the unit, and others not discussed, is an integral part of its identity as we study Cézanne's painting from the point of view of art; and when, without touching, without adding or paring off a single particle, we altered the context given it by Cézanne, either through isolating it intentionally or because of our defective perception, we could not but change that specific volume into a unit lacking the essentials given it by Cézanne. It is for this reason that our first stock-taking inventory, objective as it was up to a point, did not provide all that was necessary for knowing what Cézanne's unit is. What it fails to account for is that aspect of all things—including works of art—which makes them be what they are, the aspect summed up by the word "relationships." As the preceding analysis of Cézanne's unit has shown, one of the principles governing what anything is, and, therefore, the principle of the utmost importance to perception, is the principle of relationships.

As it is the principle of relationships in operation that we observed with our study of the Cézanne unit, so it is the same principle that we used for getting to know Miss Brown not by hearsay information *about* her but by acquaintance *with* her as she expresses herself and interacts with her surroundings. We may now come to the point of the full implication of the meaning of this principle: genuine perception of the identity of anything—of works of art, of people, of situations, of objects for use, and so on—consists not only in seeing the nature of what is there, taking note of the nature of what it is with and observing the location of the constituents, but also, and most importantly, in being aware of both the action and the effects of the action of one constituent upon and with the other because of the nature of what it is, what it is with and where it is—*i.e.*, in seeing the *results* of the particular relationships.

Relationships, John Dewey said, are active, direct, energetic; simply stated, they always *do* something specific, and we should not fail to consider what they do lest we fail really to see what a thing or situation is. Another brief return to the kindergarten can perhaps help to drive home this point—that relationships are active, that they always bring about consequences: a man and woman are married, thus adding to what they were the new identities of husband and wife; they have a son and thereby become also father and mother; they have a second child and, lo and behold, the boy, the son, becomes a brother. As another example, we might read part of a headline removed from its context as:

“Crime Urged by Mayor”

and then put it back with its introductory words:

“325 More Police to Stem Crime—
Urged by Mayor”

Optical experiments, as illustrated in Plate 11, offer still other instances: of the two identical shapes represented by Figure 1, the bottom one appears the larger regardless of which of them occupies that position; depth and the illusion of volume is created by adding to the square (Figure 2), a

context of specific perspective lines (Figure 3) on what we know to be a two-dimensional surface. By the same principle, the effect of a given color or tone depends on, and is changed by, the specific colors or tones it is with, as the squares of a medium red shown with different color-partners (see Plates 12 and 12-A) demonstrates.* These are all due to relationships—their action, their consequences; and we should also be aware of the fact that relationships make reference to the background knowledge we bring to their circumstance, for the volume one sees in Figure 3 of Plate 11 does not exist in actuality, but only intellectually, and it must be rationalized. In support of this latter point, the incident has been related of a group of people from central Africa who had never seen a ship; upon being shown a literal depiction of one, they failed to discern anything but a pattern of lines and shapes.

Summing up what we have thus far presented: in order for us to know a picture, or indeed anything, it is necessary to gather perhaps not all but as many as possible of the constituent factors, the correct factors, the factors relevant to what we are after; for our interest in the art in art we cannot use hearsay or reproductions, nor do we need to be told the allegorical or social significance of the picture's subject nor whether it is signed nor its market value nor the name of the sitter nor how it was rescued from the salt mines nor the collections it has belonged to—all of which constitutes the primary matter of most courses in art and practically the only information people seem to care about (visitors at galleries usually pay more attention to the catalogue that lists such information than to the paintings). Having the picture facts, we must also perceive their relationships and the new, specific facts resulting from the effect of one con-

* This principle partially accounts for the misleading information supplied in color reproductions: since paintings are dependent on the color relationships for their meaning, any change in value—and a reproduction does change color value—affects these relationships and therefore changes the picture's significance.

This speaks also to those "critics" of Renoir who complain that his red is repeated in picture after picture. In fact, his paintings seen side by side clearly show that in each case it is a different red because it is in a different color context, fulfilling a different expressive idea: it is always a color evolved out of its relationships with contrasting color areas, as well as out of the color relationships of its own mixture.

stituent upon another because of what each is, what it is with and where and how it occurs in its context. And, finally, we must determine the meaning of the situation to us as we are able to establish significant relationships between it—what we observe—and us—what we are and have in us: some of us could recognize and pronounce “doigt”; some of us could see of the unit in Cézanne that it says peach, that it says volume, that it expresses solidity, weightiness, and so forth.

IV

With the consideration of what we are, we meet another difficulty to be faced in our problem of learning to see; this difficulty lies at the root of any sort of human transaction or human communication, be it between us and the artist's work, the people we encounter in business or at home or the grocer selling us his wares. It is this: that each person is different from all others, not only in name, age, size, coloring, clothes, etc., but in individuality—in interests, tastes, sensitivities (both of kind and degree), tendencies, habits, background, environment, training. Even were we all twins, there would still be intellectual, emotional and psychological differences, for, as with the Cézanne peach and the altered context, the relationships between us and our particular environment affect the meaning perceived: sit one of a pair of twins on a rickety chair in a draft and a glare of light and the other on a foam-rubber cushion without draft or glare, present them with the same outside stimulus—a word statement, a picture—and they are likely to respond as if they had never even met.

To say that we all differ is a commonplace remark, but it has a relevance to our topic that cannot be ignored. It signifies, specifically, that, as we are able to see what an artist has said in his work, that meaning will stir up in each a different background, a different trend of feelings and thoughts; associations will differ; it will enter into a different network of connections with what in each of us it finds that is ready at the moment to be stirred up and brought to consciousness. As a result, any given outside happening, of which a statement of an artist is one, will acquire as many

meanings or interpretations as there are individuals taking it in. For example, if we know the English language, the statement "I believe it will stay clear the rest of the afternoon" is factually the same for all of us. On that level of understanding, what each of us is has hardly functioned, but when we do function the statement will have particular significance according to what it finds in each of us that is ready to connect with it, to relate to it. For one, it might have no special importance and evoke a response of indifference; there is no cotton in that person's ears but the cotton of unconcern for the matter that blocks the passage of the statement to any interest, feeling or imaginative faculty; he remains unaffected, and we have the right to say it meant little or nothing beyond the dictionary import of the words. In another person, the same statement might give rise to dismay—"my garden will be ruined"—while for someone else it could mean the success of his plans for the day. In another setting, the photographer in his darkroom will remain uninterested. In a war area, to one side it may mean, "Good, our planes will be able to take off"; and to the other, "Oh, no! Another day of terror." Each time, again, the meaning it has is always a matter of relationships, for relationships involve a human factor, constantly present and constantly operating. Therefore, too, a statement concerning or made by a painting, as one about the weather, is bound to elicit a diversity of responses because of what it will do to and with, and be done unto by, what it finds in each of us that it stirs up and relates to.

It is for this reason that it is so important to be as objective as we can in any study in which we hope to determine communicably universal meaning; the objective data at least remain more or less the same: the facts of a circular unit, red and yellow colors, a certain type of curve are there in the Cézanne and can be consulted again and referred to for verification, just as two molecules of hydrogen and one of oxygen and the specific conditions that make them produce water are demonstrably consistent. In contrast, "I like a lot of water in my highball" is not an objective datum; it is the expression of a personal taste which we cannot verify, but must accept whether true or not. A parallel to that is such a remark as "I

think that Renoir's blue paintings are much finer than his red ones," which is almost totally subjective because what it expresses is rooted far more deeply in the speaker's makeup and emotions than it is in the situation he refers us to, and it is not verifiable through anyone else's experience of that situation, and, therefore, it cannot help or teach anyone else to perceive Renoir. What, for that matter, does the statement tell us of Renoir's work? It does not tell us that the blue paintings *are* better. In fact, it does not tell us about the pictures at all; it tells us only about the speaker, what he feels or believes. Yet, this sort of statement is largely the basis of the system of teaching in schools and universities, where students do not learn that a picture is or is not "fine" because of what it is, but learn that they should think it "fine" or not because that is what the teacher or book happens to believe it is. Lest you wonder if this be an exaggeration, the following statement, by no means atypical, was made by a director of a museum about an artist's work:

Here is perfection. This two-panel crucifixion . . . is a perfectly painted picture from the painter's point of view. It has perfection in draftsmanship, detail and color.

.
Perfect in technique, expression and characterization, it is a fine example of the Flemish School of painting—a school known for its emphasis on perfection.

It is my favorite painting for these reasons—and for another very simple one.

It is a good picture to look at.*

It is with the same bland disregard for the work itself that students are told, perhaps as an accompaniment to a brief exposure to a slide or perhaps as one of the "facts" in an historical survey of art, that Raphael and Leonardo are among the "greatest" of artists, learning, incidentally, nothing along the way about the artist as an artist—*i.e.*, as having expressed something in his medium, in his language, that can be understood for what *it* says in terms of the meanings art reveals, meanings which have nothing to do with such adjectives as "great" or such facts about the painter's life as

* The Sunday Bulletin (News & Views), September 24, 1961.

the teacher may choose to supply. This method of "teaching" is equivalent to the procedure of instruction in most art studios, where criticism of a student's work usually takes such arbitrary form as: "That is a perfect composition, that is a beautiful line, the color is good, but your perspective is all wrong." The student, needless to say, learns not that his picture is "perfect" or "beautiful" or "wrong," but only that the teacher thinks so or, at any rate, says it is. And, indeed, the words themselves, "perfect," "beautiful," "wrong," indicate nothing except that the person using them likes or dislikes the thing so termed. The danger in this circumstance is, of course, that the student might well accept the criticism and change his work to fit it, and yet what was called "wrong" perspective might have been best for the idea he sought to express.

The objective method, the method of science, however, with all its adherence to verifiable data, does not escape, cannot escape and does not seek to escape that subjective element of personal feeling, interest, attitude and background. It is, nonetheless, directed towards minimizing the subjective: instead of stating that a picture is "fine," that the unit is a peach of a peach or that Miss Brown is a swell girl, it shows what the artist has done, states what Miss Brown has done and feeds background material against which one may on his own set up the new-to-him peach or picture or Miss Brown, and it thereby enables him to judge, to know that the work or the girl is or is not wonderful, and to know why.

V

In the preceding discussion, we have established the fundamental conditions which must be met in order to achieve genuine perception: (1) we should be able to distinguish the difference between knowledge *of* and mere knowledge *about* the object of interest, demonstrated above with the example of our getting to know Miss Brown; (2) we must consider a statement we seek to understand in terms of the language it speaks, for which we used the French word "doigt"; (3) we must, in our looking, be aware of the significance of relationships to the identity of what we see and of

the fact that those relationships are active, as our exercise with the ABC's and our isolating of Cézanne's peach made evident; and (4), while the survey of facts is one necessary step and applying the principle of relationships is a step further towards seeing, the final grasp of meanings still depends on what is in us of interest, background, feelings and imagination that we are able to bring into play, illustrated through the statement about the afternoon's weather. To this final point we should add that to know anything we must have our own experience of it: genuinely to experience an object or a situation, any situation in our world, involves it and us, and the value of the experience depends in great measure on what we bring to it and, consequently, on the manner in which we establish relationships between it and us. That "it-we, we-it" inter-action is the backbone of judgment—of the psychology of perception; it is the real basis of that special interacting, transacting relationship that arises between us and the artist's work as we come to understand what it says.

It goes without saying that the richer, the broader our background, *i.e.*, the more we have to bring into action, the richer and more significant our here-and-now experiences can be. This means, therefore, that education in art appreciation must consist, in great part, on the one hand of the intelligent building up of our background—not in the cluttering up of our mind with a collection of information, like people collecting buttons or even pictures, but in our acquiring functional material germane to our interest. And on the other hand we should attend to developing our ability to make our background function, *i.e.*, to make what we know serve as a key to unlock the door and let us get to what we seek to know, all along the way keeping our mind and feelings riveted, through our senses, on the objective, verifiable data and on the consequences of their relationships. That, in essence, is what we mean by "learning to see."

The Clue to Klee*

by HARRY SEFARBI†

"HAVE you ever seen the Marcel Duchamp Comb-in-the-Museum in the Museum on the Parkway?" I ask my students. Some say yes, they have seen it. Others shake their heads no. The rest are wary or non-committal—they distrust my questions.

I take out a pocket comb. "Duchamp's comb is a comb as this is a comb. His is made of metal and appears as though it might have been found by him after it had been discarded, perhaps by another person, and, although it ultimately was placed on exhibition in Philadelphia, it remains a perhaps-discarded-and-then-found comb—no more, no less."

"Why do you think it is in a museum of art?" I ask.

No answer.

"What is it doing there?" I ask again. "What point does it make?" My eyes pass from one to another, seeking an answer.

"Well, it makes you stop and think," ventures a redhead.

"Good!" I say. "What is it that you think, once you have stopped to think?"

Silence.

"It makes you think, 'What is it doing there?'" comes a voice, a man's.

Laughter.

I say, "Perhaps he intends to express, 'This comb is an Art Object.' After all, you have just come from looking at paintings, sculpture, African masks; the rhythm of one art object following on another leads you to expect another art object. Besides, you are in an art museum."

I pose the question, "But is it an art object?" The class is now even more wary. I say, "It has form, shape, pattern,

* This is a synthesis of a number of discussions held in my second-year class at The Barnes Foundation on the meaning of the traditions of dada and surrealism and of Paul Klee.

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unity, variety—all characteristics of art objects.” Now they are sure of it, I am pulling their leg, and one says as much.

I decide that the moment has come for some explaining. “The Comb in the Museum is an example of dada.”

A murmur of “da, da, da, da,” spreads over the class as the word is tried on the tongue.

I continue. “The intention of dada was to hold up to question, or to deride and thereby to destroy, every or any existing point of view in art. This was to be achieved by presenting chance markings, made automatically as doodles are made, as drawings; hacked-at logs as sculpture.” I show an example of dada poetry: scrambled words taken at random from a bag and juxtaposed on a page without regard either for meanings or for rules of typography. “This attitude of denial, which crystallized in 1916 in Zurich and was later made notorious in an historic exhibition held in Cologne, continues as a tradition that governs the art world of the present moment. Almost every stunt staged by the Pop artists, the present-day dada-ists, has its duplicate in the original dada movement. The general public is puzzled, sometimes amused, and often, sensing that its leg is being pulled, resentful.”

I change my question. “Is Marcel Duchamp pulling our leg? Why is his comb in a museum of art?” Which is where we started.

A student points to a work by Paul Klee,* a line drawing, tinted with watercolor, whose subject is a head, perhaps. A flower, maybe. Possibly a mushroom. Is the neck a stem? The stem a collar? “Isn’t that a doodle?” he asks. “Why is that in a collection of art?”

This Klee, among others, has been brought to the room in the gallery, where the class is meeting, to serve as part of the subject of our discussion of the day.

We talk about the line. It is a line that seems spontaneous, meandering, drawn freely, and left before its final use has been determined—casual, unstudied, not classic. A doodle? A scribble? A child could do it. Further, it appears that the face/flower/mushroom/hat it depicts occurred

* Plate 10.

to the artist after the fact—circles for eyes and dashes for lips were added, then tints for a flesh tone, an ochre tone for background put in to continue the fantasy. What might have started tentatively as a scribble, or the beginnings of a doodle, has now become a flower/head shape whose spontaneity, origin, casualness are evident and exposed. “I might have done it. You might have done it. But we didn’t. Paul Klee did it, and here it is, on the wall of a gallery of an art school, part of a collection of art.”

I bring the class back to the Comb in the Museum. It has an inscription: “*3 ou 4 Gouttes de Hauteur n’ont Rien à Faire avec la Sauvagerie* (3 or 4 Drops of Loftiness Have Nothing to Do with Savagery). *Feb. 17 1916 11 a.m..*” Whatever does it mean? Or does it mean anything? A comb being exhibited in a public museum of art! It all seems capricious: the comb, the inscription, the whole idea.

Our bit of scribble, or doodle, by Klee also has an inscription that serves as a title: “*Diese Blüte will verwelken* (This Flower Will Fade), *1939 L m 20.*” What does that mean? A statement? A bit of philosophy? A *pensée*? Something to live by? The whole thing seems too light, too transparent in quality, too spontaneous in execution to carry such a loaded title. Secretly, I think he, Klee, may have had me—Sefarbi, lecturer/teacher/artist—in mind. I often say of Renoir roses, “Unlike garden roses, his will never fade, but instead will grow as the viewer grows, as his knowledge grows and his perceptivity develops.” Is Klee’s statement anti-art? Anti-Renoir? Anti-me?

Wit and humor, satire and parody are often motivating forces of creation—Molière out to deflate the medical profession, “Joseph Andrews” created to deride “Pamela”—usually associated with the theatre or with literature. In painting, humor seems relegated to painters willing and able to deal in illustration: Daumier’s political cartoons, Lautrec’s Montmartre “types,” Goya’s aspects of Spanish life. And with these artists the humor rests in the caricature, perhaps the distortion of the body parts to invite laughter and ridicule: missing teeth, a bony knee; or the satire of the costume: the plunging décolletage seen in the work of

Lautrec or the royal finery as depicted by Goya; or, again, a twist of the pose of the body toward the ludicrous: a burlesque of the quadrille, the collapse of the hypochondriac.

An aspect of Picasso's work, overlooked or misunderstood, is his illustration. Perhaps his work will be seen one day as dependent on facts of feature and costume and movement, plus a sly illustrative humor that appears in all of his periods, early and late, cubist and non-cubist. After all, in a collage, to paste an oilcloth picture of chair caning on to a canvas to represent chair caning, and to have it serve as a background for painted objects, is at least humorous. It can be seen as a parody of reality in a painting, a *trompe-l'œil* to fool the eye into mistaking a paste-up for a rendering of the subject. It is the same sense of humor that leads him to put bright, extending ears on a baby otherwise painted in subtle nuances of blue; or to set a chignon askew; or to cast in bronze a cake slicer balancing a marble sugar cube to represent a hat in a bit of sculpture. However, his position is too Olympian at this moment in time for this to be seen as caricature. The meaning of what Picasso does must be profound.

But dada was not in awe. It seized upon collage both as a target and as a vehicle for its message. The *trompe-l'œil* effects of the pasted-on chair caning became photo-montage in dada; and the newsprint, sheet music, calling cards, so neat and spare in the collages of Picasso, became in dada a juxtaposed hodge-podge of assorted waste—match covers and postmarks and buttons and corks pasted into a rebus-like order. Even torn squares of paper, allowed to drop from the hand and pasted down where they had fallen at random, seem to have fallen into a cubist-collage order.

Duchamp is perhaps more subtle and enigmatic. In the light of his subsequent iconoclastic activities, his famous "Nude Descending a Staircase" and "The Passage from Virgin to Bride" can be seen as bantering the futurists' walking dogs and bicycle riders in motion. His "Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even" is dada collage. His sugar cubes, also marble, poke fun at de Chirico's three-dimensional cubism; his "Tu m' " at Picasso's calligraphy. The comb, a so-called "ready-made," can be seen as a satiric

commentary on negro sculpture as art: artifacts found in everyday life of nineteenth century African tribes made the transition from an anthropologic status to an aesthetic one when they were seen to be rhythmic and sculptural and when they became the source of Picasso's negro period as well as of ideas for his cubism. Their habitat, as a result, shifted from the anthropologic museum to the art museum. Duchamp's comb, a found object from twentieth century everyday life, playing the role of an artifact or of an Art Object in a museum, is perhaps a comedy staged to burlesque that change-over. Thought of in this way, the work of Duchamp and other dada-ists takes on the character of practical jokes—private jokes whose points of reference in many instances have been forgotten. What remains is what we see: a comb in a glass case in a museum of art.

Unlike other art movements that developed out of opposition to existing traditions, dada did not intend to create a new or personal way of seeing. Unlike Courbet, for example, whose paintings offended the effete classic spirit of the French Academy of his day by presenting unidealized nudes—unidealized but expressive of a strength never before seen in that way—dada was content to be mischievous, satisfied to put a moustache on the Mona Lisa. And although the attitude was anti-art, it was mainly anti-cubism, poking fun by burlesquing the mannerisms of its victims: cubism itself, and its offshoots—futurism, collage, constructions.

However, Picasso, the entertainer, got into the spirit of it all and, becoming ever more extravagant, turned bicycle seat and handlebars into bull's head and horns, toy auto into ape's head, spoon and forks into head and hands, spigot into bird's beak. These discarded objects are seen as metaphors and called *objets trouvés*—"found objects" turned into "Art Objects"—and made to pass as sculpture by becoming parts of an identifiable figure or animal. But, here again, the figures are caricatures because of the distortion of the facts toward humor: a teaspoon head, a faucet beak, a toy-auto face—a droll cast.

Ultimately, in the 1920's, the movement known as surrealism appeared—an extension, as it were, of dada. The

automatism of dada was continued as scribbling; the photomontage was to reappear in the juxtaposition of disparate objects—objects, however, painted and meticulously rendered; and, henceforth, these were to be considered the products of unconscious activity or of the dream world. They were supplemented with borrowings from de Chirico—the deep empty space, the enigmatic symbols, and the concept of the metaphysical and otherworldliness. Also, the work of children, as well as that of the insane, came to be considered as perhaps the most authentic sources of unconscious material.

The “scribble” of Klee that we have been considering can be seen as having roots in the automatism of dada and surrealism, but, as we shall see, automatism that falls victim to Klee’s wit and fantasy. Klee, too, has done his satiric versions of futurism that recall the “Nude Descending a Staircase.” His are in the form of geometric shapes, triangles and trapezoids equipped with legs, moving like costumed children carrying flags and escorted by dogs, strolling to the East.* And cubism abounds in his work, both as a way of thinking and as a way of working but also as a subject for his wit. “*Der letzte Landsknecht* (The Last Mercenary), 1932, B 1”† exists as a portrait head, perhaps of a knight wearing an elaborately folded paper hat, seen as a cubist rhythm of interpenetrating planes. At the same time, it recalls the portraits of Picasso’s analytical-cubist days—the much-reproduced ones of Kahnweiler and Vollard come to mind. But with a difference: this fairy-tale character, with its childish fierceness of expression, seems a dainty yet pointed comment on those relentlessly faceted portraits, while the shapes themselves, playfully patterned and methodically hatched, make light of what has been presented as the scientific or mathematical nature of cubism.

Like a product of dada-surrealism, our head/flower under discussion seems to have started out as a tentative scribble/

* “*Spaziergang im Orient* (Promenade in the Orient), 1932, w 19.” Plate 18. Another example, “*Familien Spaziergang* (Family Walk), j. 10,” 1930, in the Klee Foundation collection, Berne, is a variation in the same vein.

† Plate 9.

scrawl, on which, however, Klee brought his imagination to bear and found this face/head/flower/mushroom/hat, held/cradled/cupped/supported on a neck/stem/trunk/collar. Perhaps this was intended as part of experiments in uncontrolled automatism, but he obviously consciously selected, and he obviously wants us to know that he selected. (Duchamp moves to deny this aspect of creativity when he selects a comb—any comb; “it is a matter of visual indifference”—to be enshrined, unchanged, as a work of art.) Klee, the artist-illustrator discovers (selects) the head, while Klee the artist-fantasist distorts it toward the multi-meaning image. By finding and incorporating, in the lines and the tones of color, qualities at once whimsical and ironic, these disconnected yet related ideas become wit—the wit of turning a phrase. Here, the turn is of shape or contour, as a pun is a play on words or as wit is a play on ideas.

And what does he discover? A face. And this kind of face. If it is the material of the unconscious, there is something human and endearing about finding in his “unconscious” scrawl the naïve, childlike head rather than the grotesques popularly associated with that mysterious area of the mind. Our own fantasies are not too different. Or if they are, doesn’t this one seem simple and sweet and uncomplicated, in keeping with the scrawl? Its very simplicity, by contrast, satirizes the grotesque inventions of the surrealists: doesn’t it seem to chide gently, by its head/flower/hat subject, the sexual and bawdy material “found” by Miró or illustrated by Dali?

A question from the class: “But I thought Klee was ‘abstract,’ and yet the discussion seems to center on subjects.”

Klee’s works have recognizable subjects; the opposite is the exception. And the subject matters. It needs to be recognized, if only to understand the distortion and to be able to follow his caprice: camels and cats, children and dogs, knights and musicians, gardens and landscapes. In their way, these carry the humor of the illustrator—the walking triangles, the fierce knight, the snaky musicians—but they are completely personal and ever novel in their childlike

lightness and naïveté.* (I once told a group of children that a reproduction of a drawing of fish that I was showing them had been done by Paul Klee. "What grade's he in?" they wanted to know.)

Although we are amused by the humor of his caricature, more significantly, Paul Klee jests as much with the traditions involved in the work as with the subject. To scribble in the manner of a dada-surrealist, and then to discover therein a childlike caricature, is amusing and delightful. At the same time, there are overtones of satire and parody. For a childlike drawing "automatically" to emerge from a scribble seems to twit the surrealists' idea that child art is an authentic source of unconscious activity. In other instances, Klee's references to the possessed or the demented serve the purposes of wit and not those of science, as so much writing about his work would have us believe. It is as though we are in the presence of a mime who gravely mimics the posturings of some public figure, only to arrive at an unexpected conclusion that serves to deflate that figure. The facts of the subject are but a part of the meaning of the painting. The caricature, like the unexpected conclusion, only contributes to the larger insight—what he has done to the tradition rather than to the shape of the nose or eye. The humor or irony or parody—and it expresses all of these—is altogether plastic, produced by those lines, those dots, those color washes, those shapes.

If Duchamp has managed to have his comb accepted by a museum, and if the museum treats it in exactly the same way as it treats its other exhibits, it is the situation of

* Plate 19, which illustrates a print pulled from a linoleum block cut by a child, recalls the above-mentioned watercolor "*Spaziergang im Orient*" (Plate 18). The geometrically shaped figures; the pointed head, the star/crown hat and the bonnet/headdress of angular shape; the stick-figure animals—all relate the subject matter of both to each other. The predominance of line and the rhythm of planes, together with the grainy texture of the pigment, as well as the shape and size of the panel, make parallel the treatment of both. The print might have been done by Klee. But it was not: this is the work of a child. Its "childish" handling as opposed to Klee's "childlike" approach demonstrates what those adjectives mean, and points up the values inherent in each. The traditions of futurism and cubism found in the Klee, as well as the tone of satire resulting from their use, are not to be found in the work of the child. (For a corresponding example, see V. de Mazia's "Learning to See," footnote, page 12, in this JOURNAL.)

"The Comb in the Museum" that makes his points about found objects or art in general. It makes laughable what the cubist would have us take seriously by carrying the idea of *objets trouvés* to the point of travesty. The subject is the same, an object that has been found, but, by omitting the metaphor, the presentation is made extravagant or absurd. Klee, on the other hand, uses the same means as the dada-surrealist—the scribble, the free association, the often enigmatic title—and makes of them something whimsical, humorous, and, more important, creative and personal. Duchamp is largely concerned with stunts—"The Comb in the Museum," "The Cubes in the Cage," "The Wheel on the Stool"—stunts that are at once comical and mischievous, absurd and extravagant. Although intending to nip and tease, he succeeds only at being obscure because the meaning is not in the object but, rather, in the situation. To find in a museum a found comb, and such a comb that looks as though it had been found, may raise question and provide diversion from the usual museum rounds. But the comb removed from the museum reverts to its combness, and loses its satiric meaning, because the situation has been destroyed. Klee's watercolor, however, retains its meaning in or out of a museum. The scribble is intrinsic to the line and its meaning, and the meaning grows out of that line: its spontaneity, the left-as-it-came quality, the meaning-coming-into-being of it. The metaphor of flower/hat/face/head are expressed by it and are in it and of it—a metaphor that includes a will-o'-the-wisp charm of a found-in-the-scrawl flower/hat/face/head, which, were the lines words, would be called a poem.

The multimeaning quality of the line, as well as the multimeaning subject, does recall lyric poetry, where not only the meaning of the words has weight but the qualities of the words chosen have equal or more weight. A phrase such as Shelley's "O, wild West Wind . . ." has subject meanings such as untamed, unfettered, *farouche*, direction, momentum—a force of nature given a human personality. At the same time, the words themselves are gusty, explosive, alliterative, onomatopoeic. The "w's" have to be almost whistled, necessitating a pause between each word, thus building up a

positive rhythm. Similarly, the meaning of this Klee lies in the union of the spontaneous immediacy of the line and the fantasy-controlled, multimeaning subject.

The class remains unsatisfied. "But a caricature. That's the stuff found in the comic strips of the daily paper. Can that be art?"

I answer with a demonstration: German Madonnas and female saints of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries are often simpering and doll-faced, big-headed, cute.* They have double chins drawn with superficial lines and are short and thickset, stodgy compared with the ascetic Florentines or the regal Venetians, where the subject's facts matter less or are not distorted toward characterizing. The saints in German painting are as much caricatured as characterized. Bosch, of the Flemish School, depicts faces with broken noses, missing teeth, and figures with earthy rather than classic proportions. Both of these examples, faces and figures, have their roots in Austrian and German primitive painting and, indeed, are descended from them. Closer to our time, George Grosz, Saul Steinberg, and the German expressionists continue this tradition of caricature. Here, Klee's is a simple treatment of the German Madonna type: linear, an expanse of forehead, a simpering expression. The face is cute and somewhat ponderous in its size and in the way it fills the space. If one's traditions are embedded in the unconscious, as they undoubtedly are, how logical for him, a German-trained German-Swiss artist, to have found a German type in his scribble. The line itself has its counterpart in German primitive painting, where so often lines are seen as isolated, superficial, and expedient. These lines are used to delineate in an obvious manner a crown, perhaps, in an ensemble where the other units, figures or drapery, are made by color and convincingly modeled to appear three-dimensional. Here in our Klee, the line is simply a line, also isolated and obvious, but expressing whimsy, spontaneity, directness, simplicity, and more.

"But the color?" comes the question. "It seems so light and, compared to Venetian painting, a mere tint. It seems

* See Plate 13.

to be a child's exercise in making a watercolor wash stay within its contours."

The color does seem lightweight in comparison to the meaning that color can be made to carry in a Venetian painting. Although the medium in this case is watercolor, the lightness has its counterpart in German oil painting. There, color is often lightened in the process of modeling so that it appears bled of its strength, or it has been made bright by the fact that the ground shines through the lightened color, which is a mere tint. The color found in the area of the nose of our flower/head is perhaps closest to this. Overall, however, the color is not seen as lightened Flemish color, so often characteristic of German primitive painting. The tones talk color and pastel in a way that relate them to French painting. In fact, it was Klee's visits to France and his contact with French painting that led him to explore the possibilities of color. The very lightness, the simple washes, indeed very much like a child filling in a space with an appropriate color, is in keeping with the whole spirit of whimsy and charm, the antithesis of Venetian qualities. Its careful, serious application, unexpected in the context of the spontaneous scrawl, conveys some of the absorption and care of the dedicated medieval illuminator carrying out his vocation. This spirit is continued in the body of his work, done on sheets of paper of small size, often of odd shape, or perhaps utilizing bits of canvas or cloth. This is in the tradition of the Northern European miniature painting: ikons and portraits executed with a strong sense of craftsmanship within the limits of small panels.

The clue to understanding Klee's personality is the caprice that leads him to dart from one idea to another. The clue to understanding an individual Klee painting is to see it as a play on a particular tradition—dada-surrealism in this case, de Chirico symbolism in another. Again, it will be analytical cubism or stained glass. To perceive the tradition involved is the beginning of a shared experience between artist and viewer. When the viewer responds to the way that Klee has treated that tradition, the experience includes the quality of a shared joke or witticism—the enjoyment is

heightened by the sense of being "in the know." For in Klee's work these traditions are interpreted from the point of view of his personality and are made humorous and endearing as a result. Cubism becomes a child's game of magic squares, futurism becomes promenading triangles, Cézanne becomes a checkerboard. We are drawn into the game and fun of matching wits. "What's the clue?" Ah, yes, stained glass in this landscape, automatism in that head. Here I find Dürer's hatchings, there it is Seurat's dots, now it is a faded fabric recalling some unearthed Coptic material. Now the fantasy has its counterpart in a Westphalian panel or the folklore of Bosch. These traditions are all seen from a new perspective, encompassed by a new insight, and put in their place by a mocking yet gentle wit. The continual variations played within this small compass—a play on and with unexpected materials as well as the unexpected traditions—express the sprightly imagination, the richly inventive intellectual life which gave birth to these objects.

"But what makes it art?" comes from the class.

The big question: "But is it art?" It is the question that elicits the most give-and-take, that generates the most heat. It was out of concern with this question that The Barnes Foundation grew. It was the need to deny any answers to this question that led to the birth of the dada movement. Every such discussion has its own content and character, built around certain fundamental ideas.

One of the aspects of art is that it is creative. It shows us something never before seen in this way. This new something, once perceived, sharpens our eyes not only to the world but also to other works of art. We see them differently; we understand them differently. After one has perceived the work of Courbet, French Academic painters appear superficial, hollow, and pseudo-classic. Similarly, Klee's watercolor reduces dada to fun and games about art, and the surrealists are seen as not much more serious.

A work of art is unique. Many of the original dada objects have been lost or have disappeared and are represented in museums by a facsimile or replica. These substitutes serve just as well as the original object, or perhaps even better if one considers that it is also the uniqueness of art that is being

denied.* Should a painting by Klee be lost or destroyed, however, its meaning would be lost or destroyed with it. Our response to a facsimile or reproduction of a Klee is the response one has to any imitation: we react to the quality of the imitation. We say, "This is a good—or bad—reproduction," and withhold judgment until we are face to face with the real thing.

Klee gives form to wit, and to other attitudes as well, as an artist. Although he uses the dada-ist device of a scribble, he brings to it his preoccupation with the means of his medium—predominantly color and line in this instance. The color scheme found here, as well as the delicacy and sensitivity with which it is handled, is unique to him and is immediately recognizable when borrowed and used by another artist [1].† The color is used to label specific areas [2], but with a sensitivity to the effects of gradations of tone and color value and an ability to make these take part in delicate contrasts that are anything but automatic [3]. The color appeals to us as a decorative element in addition to any other meaning it may have [4]. A saturated blue floated over the eyes and the brightly red, tiny, and precisely shaped lips superimposed over the dash of a mouth are amusing as illustration, but also serve in the interest of unity and variety [5]. The color is used for its possible meanings as well as for its immediate appeal. It is lightened in order to model subtle volumes [6]. It creates planes in space which interact in a delicate cubist arrangement [7] that, together with the lines, creates a sense of plastic activity, bringing an aura of life to this simplest of watercolors [8].

Unlike the comb in the museum, this flower/head, like all works of art, expresses the meaning of the artist's experience, which in this case resulted in this watercolor object. The line has a spontaneous yet deliberate feeling [9] that, like the color, is immediately decorative [10]. It is the base on which this watercolor is built [11], and it is executed in a manner suggesting a feat carried off by a child for his own amusement [12]. The result is a novel invention, never seen in

* *E.g.*, "Bottle Rack," 1914. Marcel Duchamp. Replica 1961. Philadelphia Museum of Art. Lent by Mme. Marcel Duchamp.

† For this and the following numerical notations consult Notes, pp. 42–44.

Klee's work before in this way, drawn from a seemingly inexhaustibly fertile spirit [13].

The bold line is subtly expressive [14] and is such that it leads the viewer to share Klee's response to it—to this line that he has produced. The observer finds himself involved in the process of discovery and able to follow the artist as he, the artist, objectifies his feelings and associations. He has found a face! He has then added to or emphasized its character and psychological expressiveness [15]. We share his fantasy [16]. A kind of metamorphosis occurs as we watch [17], an experience at once mystical and magical and mysterious [18]. All is evocative, mobile, emerging: a sport of intertwining, enmeshed meanings, deceptively simple and open. The very scale is charming—its dimensions: $11\frac{1}{2}$ " by $8\frac{1}{8}$ "—a work of art in miniature [19].

All of the above qualities—the whimsical, the humorous, the symbolic, the dada, the surrealist, as well as what is illustrative and what is decorative—are of interest and significance to us. Klee has given them a new specific identity, expressed in relationships of line and color, which makes them worthy of our attention. The colors and the quality of the color are unique, personal to Klee, as are the lines and what he does with them. The witty caricature is creative—a personal reflection of his German roots. The cubist aspects are recast in terms of his own color ideas and sensitivity to the expressiveness of shapes. What we have called the painting's stained-glass quality is of a stained glass that exists in no church. Symbols can now be Klee-like. There exists now this kind of Klee-like whimsy.

This flower/head is a paraphrase of dada-surrealism with overtones of cubism, pervaded by the lightness and delicacy of the artist's personality. Its specific meanings can only be found here, in this way, in this object fashioned by Klee to express them, and are carried out in the medium chosen, thereby elevating it to the status of art. Our fund of meanings for humor and fantasy has now been added to and expanded. Our response to the world will be the richer for it.

And then, always, the inevitable question: "Did Klee know what he was doing?"

What is intriguing is the question of whether Klee is con-

sciously joking or whether he is seriously experimenting, only to have his products emerge as amusing and diverting. Again we can find a parallel in German and Flemish primitive painting, of which the wit, fantasy, and caprice are the primary sources of Klee's personality. For example, Bosch shows Christ bearing the Cross surrounded by caricatured types that divert and amuse the viewer in a situation where only seriousness would seem called for. Or does Bosch intend a suffering Christ surrounded by rude peasant types which to us appear amusing and diverting? Did Bosch know what he was doing?

There is a kind of pervading incongruity that amuses and challenges in both Bosch and Klee. Klee's work is at once serious and whimsical, as in his carefully filled-in scrawl. He is lightly profound in his cubist magic squares. He is intellectual and childlike in the rendering of the fierce knight seen as analytical cubism. He is an earthbound metaphysician, playfully inventing and then carefully arranging indecipherable symbols. He is methodical and capricious as he moves from one playful idea to another, yet taking time to title, number, and record each passing whimsy. His work is at once immediate and profound: a caricature for the uninitiated, a plastic comment for the perceptive. Unlike Picasso, whose humor is largely limited to caricature, Klee's humor is more inclusive. He plays at automatism in dada-surrealist terms and transcends it. He out-symbols de Chirico. He out-cubes the cubists. It is all a delightful game.

Up comes a hand: "What about the titles? You mentioned titles earlier—are they a clue to Klee?"

I repeat an old lesson: "Titles serve to identify paintings. As often as not, they have been given to the paintings by someone other than the artist, perhaps a dealer or a museum director. The lay person, unaware of plastic values, mistakes the title for the meaning of the painting and is content if title seems to fit painting, unhappy if it does not." (Duchamp, in the tradition of dada, often derides these title-seekers by offering them an absurd title to ponder, one whose meaning can never be solved.)

A Klee title can mislead us because, rather than simply identifying the subject as a person or some things or a

place, it is often provocative. Like his paintings, the title may be enigmatic or profoundly philosophical, witty or whimsical. Furthermore, it is written directly below the work, in ink, and in his own hand. It is tempting to consider this title, supplied by the artist, as the clue to the meaning of the painting to which it is affixed. However, although the inscription may be a statement, a witticism, or a bit of philosophy and although the connection between title and painting may be abstruse or obvious, it is outside the work: it serves only to identify it. What must be remembered is that the same personality that created the painting is at work here, but at work in a different medium.

The phrase used to identify the painting, "This Flower Will Fade," resounds with weight and portent—and fun, too—and thus invites our smiles in this context. It is an epigram, a form borrowed from literature and made to serve as a title. The clue to this watercolor, however, is to be found in the tradition of painting; its meaning will only emerge as we parallel Klee's experience as expressed in terms of that medium.

Every Klee stands as an invitation to share such an experience, and, always, the invitation carries the challenge to play his game, to join in his fun. "But first the rules: You must investigate the traditions, and sharpen your perception. Or you can't play."

NOTES

- [1] The color is bright with light, lightweight in quality, and distinctively subtle. The same lightness appears in Klee's oil paintings, as well as his work in other media. His color scheme in general is distinctive. The actual colors used in the flower/head are typical, although the quality of the color is more delicate than is usual, suggesting the translucency of tinted, transparent glass, yet with the softness of pastel and enjoyable as a bit of decoration over and above any other meaning it might have.
- [2] The color is used to designate specific areas—ochre background, flesh-tinted face, blue to green in the flower/hat. More than mere labels, the color is used by Klee to express his response to the line that he had made. Having perceived the line as a face, he uses the color to make his fantasy concrete: by means of the color the expanse of forehead becomes hat/flower/forehead.
- [3] The color changes as it moves from area to area, expressing a sensitivity to gradation of tone and subtle variation of color. Gentle contrast results when the compartments of color meet—when, for example, the flesh-tone area borders the blue area or blue meets an ochre area.

- [4] All delicately managed, this nicety in subtle change of tone and color value, plus the delicate contrasts, are set off by the bold line, depicting as it does a modest caricature. The color can be enjoyed sensuously, as the color of a stained-glass window thrills without reference to its depicted subject.
- [5] The blue circle-eyes and red dash-lips serve to stake out a triangle of color points—intense punctuations in a pale color field whose contrast creates a dainty drama. The eye-blue is a saturated tone of the blue used in the color washes and therefore relates to it. At the same time, its vividness creates a sense of drama and strength in miniature by contrast with the delicacy of the wash. The lips come as a tiny red surprise. The spirit is one of careful selection, precise placement, and ultimate order.
- [6] The color has been lightened to create pockets for the eyes, to give a delicate suggestion of volume to the flower/head, to make a three-dimensional plane of the nose.
- [7] The lightened nose acts as a plane that juts out into space from the face. The face, too, can be seen as a plane resting on its chin on a platter/plane or cupped in its stemmed goblet/collar. The background, the tulip/head/hat, the triangle above the nose all can be seen as planes. Each of these planes is given an identity by its shape and color and a place in space by the relationship of the tones of color chosen. This results in a cubist rhythm, adding another dimension of meaning to the head.
- [8] The rhythm of interpenetrating planes contrasts with the continuous lines that sweep, then swerve, then sweep again, over and under, to result in nose, brow, cheek, and creates a lively contrasting movement of pale planes and bold lines punctuated by circle-eyes and dash-lips.
- [9] Deliberately spontaneous, it is a line that moves—drawn off the cuff, yet with purpose: a sweep, then a pause before making another sweep. It is not an aimless arabesque.
- [10] Its boldness against the pale colorfulness can be seen as a shape, punctuated with circle-eye dots and lip and brow dashes that are immediately decorative, over and above any other meanings the line may have. It has an independent decorative appeal like the leading in a stained-glass window.
- [11] Klee's line varies from picture to picture: hatchings in one; broad, blunt strokes in another; delicate arabesques in yet another. What holds generally true is his constant reliance on some kind of line in designs of multi-meaning fantasy, as in this instance.
- [12] In our flower/head, the line starts at a point and moves continuously and unbrokenly until it has served to make a contour, closed a shape, or made a configuration, or until it has reached the limits of the paper. Then the pencil is lifted, another starting point chosen, and another line is started on its path of delineation. The whole operation takes on the quality of a performance, a trick carried off: a child's trick, a simple feat presented with an élan that invites applause from the "grown-ups."
- [13] Knowing other pictures by Klee leads us to anticipate some novelty, and we are not disappointed. This flower/head is unlike other Klees here in Merion or in Philadelphia or anywhere. And yet it is like them. It prepares us for the others, which will in some way be linear, with subtle yet bright colors, executed in some novel way, as the ones we have seen before have prepared us for this one. Yes, we have seen many Klees, and we will see many more, yet none exactly like this one. Its inventiveness is part of Klee's aesthetic character. We applaud.
- [14] An undisguised line, it is varied, slightly bolder here, slightly less bold

there, sometimes serving to bring out a feature, sometimes not. It lures us to follow its path not only by its sweep, but also by the promise of its meaningfulness as a line. It is not a monotone of a line. It has variety, richness, and strength.

- [15] The pinched nose, the watery and floating circle-eyes, the pursed doll lips, and the small chin together serve to give the head a unique identity.
- [16] Before our eyes a simple, round-cheeked head appears. An artless saint of unknown sect, coiffed and collared, perhaps, and veiled, too, comes into being.
- [17] The change from scribble to fantasy before our eyes is metamorphic. It represents a whole change in substance. We respond to the emergence from the configuration of line of this smooth, unwrinkled, and childlike face. The head becoming one with the tulip in full view smacks of witchcraft. At the same time, we are kept aware of the line as a doodle/scribble and its ambivalent function. It is the color that acts to express or underline the changing meanings Klee perceives in his lines and to make apparent the scribble-changing-into-fantasy aspect of this experience.
- [18] It is mystical in the union of face and tulip; it is magical in that these are made to appear physically before our eyes, like sleight of hand. A note of mystery is suggested by the symbols created by the configuration that results in nose, eye, and brow and by the mathematical symbol that divides the head and rests on the brow. The eyes and mouth are related like a constellation of stars that serves as an anchor amid the movement of lines and planes.
- [19] For all that the head appears childlike and unplanned and is big-headed and space-filling, the overall effect is that of miniature painting—a painting too small for a huge gallery, but, rather, for a room that invites intimate contact, private examination and study, like the one in which it hangs. Although the painting is small and appealing in its immediacy and cleverness, it cannot be considered superficial. Rather, it suggests the understatement of wit and the succinctness of art, where a minimum of means is a virtue.

The Light of Vermeer

adapted

to

Photographic Studies

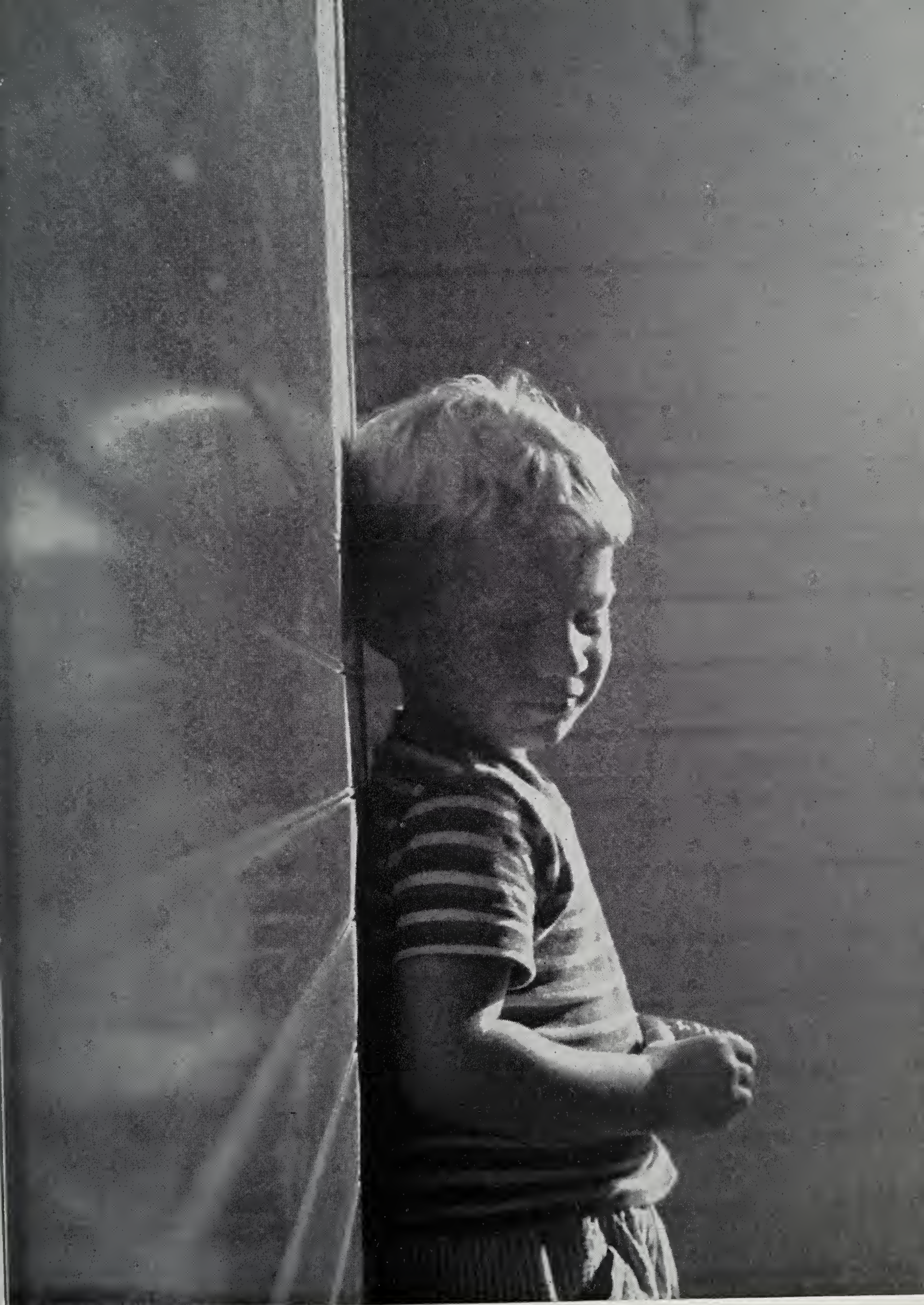
by ANGELO PINTO

(Member of the Art Department Teaching Staff.)













A Sonata—A Painting

A Comparison

by BARTON CHURCH*

IT is a simple instinctive act for humans to compare, to examine the character or qualities of various things against others, according to a particular viewpoint or interest, in order to discover resemblances and differences. Note a young child playing with different kinds of round objects—feeling to discover shape and texture, lifting to determine weight, tasting to find out whether one is an apple, a peach or a tennis ball. If his interest is to find something to eat, as he notices that the tennis ball has many similarities to a peach—both are spherical, furry and soft—he might attempt, because of his limited experience in significant comparisons, to bite into it. In doing so, he discovers, of course, that the skin does not tear and that the ball yields neither juice nor something sweet to chew. If, on the other hand, the child's interest is in play rather than food, he finds that a soft, round peach will roll like a tennis ball, but it will not bounce and soon bruises and becomes squishy. By these experiments, he is able to realize two major discoveries: he necessarily comes to an understanding, however limited, of the unique identity of the given object, what it is because of its sensible attributes and because of what it can and cannot be made to do; and, at the same time, he acquires an awareness of some of the basic features by which things in general attain identity—in this case, for example, such features as a spherical shape, a fuzzy texture, sweetness, bounciness and relative weight. It should also be noted that his special interest or point of view is an inherent element in what he was able to learn—*i.e.*, his search for food or a plaything led him to the particular definition of the objects considered according to their suitability to his purpose.

With the adult, as with the child, comparisons always involve sense perception, discernment and correlation. In later life we no longer taste tennis balls, but we do continue to compare, using much the same process. Making compari-

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sons, for instance, often plays a major role in the professions: lawyers using precedents to argue cases are comparing earlier situations to the one at hand; medical men basing diagnosis on symptoms are comparing the evidence of the moment with signs observed on previous occasions and from this deducing possible indications of meaning. Both these later applications, as well as others we could cite, and those of the child indicate the nature of the results of comparing—namely, the formulation of *categories* of things, groupings derived from differentiated similarities, by which we organize our experiences.

Since differentiation and grouping reflect our interests or points of view, we are inclined to accept the resulting categories as exclusive indicators of meaning (peaches—food, tennis balls—play) and, taking the line of least resistance, to assess what we meet according to its relationship to other things within its own established group. In criticism or analysis, for example, we usually base our understanding of a novel on a comparison of it with other novels, an opera on its comparison with other operas, a picture on its comparison with other pictures, and so on—in each case, the comparison being either actual or implicit depending on whether we consider a given example from the point of view of the traditions, *i.e.*, its relationship to other specific works in the field, or of its form, *i.e.*, its demonstration of the characteristics we have come to associate with novels, operas or paintings.

This type of analysis is, of course, essential to arriving at the unique identity of the object under study and to making legitimate objective judgment of it. At the same time, however, we may also find it rewarding of new insight to make what might be called, on the surface at least, mixed comparisons, such as between opera and play or poetry and prose.* These comparisons, too, are governed by our im-

* Actually, any comparison precipitates the formation of a new category reflecting the point of interest brought to bear—as poetry and prose may fall under the definition of literature; opera and play under theatre; or all four together, as well as others, under art. We call it a “mixed” comparison when, as intended here, we wish to maintain and emphasize the fact that, for our interest, each of the objects compared has an identity which is more essential to it as an *exclusive* form than that which it acquires when we formulate the comparison. Likewise with the peach and tennis ball, the categories of “food” and “plaything” were more essential as identities to the child than the category under which they become comparable, *e.g.*, “spherical objects.”

posing a specific point of view; we select certain attributes belonging to the material under consideration that mean something to us, and on these we focus our attention for an enriched understanding of the entire entity: by comparing opera and drama we may, for instance, more fully appreciate the role of stage presentation in the effectiveness of each, or in comparing poetry and prose we may make ourselves particularly aware of the contribution of the cadence of language to the expressive intent.

It is possible to make mixed comparisons because, as demonstrated with the peach and tennis ball, quite different things may have any number of features in common. The rewards of doing so, however, depend upon the degree of importance of the feature chosen both to the identity of each thing compared and to the standpoint from which the comparison is wrought. In particular, music and painting, though not sensuously of a kind, have often been compared on the essential basis of qualities which the two arts are able to convey: a Beethoven symphony and a Cézanne figure group, for example, express a similar kind of grandness and power; a Mozart sonata and a Renoir landscape are distinguished by an analogous lyricism.

It is because both music and painting are, though different in specifics, primarily sensuous media—unlike, for example, literature—that such correlation of value may so readily be made. Indeed, so congenially do the two expressive forms share in qualitative meanings that much of the very terminology of description and analysis is used interchangeably: one can speak perfectly to the point of musical “lines” and orchestral “color” or, in painting, of color “chords” and “harmonious” color relationships, for, though “line,” “color,” “chord,” and “harmony” have particular and distinctive meanings within each medium, yet we are aware of an underlying sameness of effect in the differing phenomena to which these terms refer that gives them equal coherence in both circumstances. Consider, for instance, the term “volume,” which is applied to utterly unlike phenomena in the two fields—in music designating fulness or quantity of tone and in painting the illusion of spatial depth and the three-dimensional appearance of units therein; nevertheless, there is a consistency of the impact on us of what it stands for—

referring in both cases to the fact and degree of "impinging" substance of the medium, its physical ability to fill the field of perception in which it occurs. In short, the difference in the exact meaning implied when these and other terms are used to describe musical effects and when they refer to painting is the difference that exists between experiences of auditory and of visual material—experiences, however, one and the same in being basically sensuous. If, therefore, our point of view be directed towards their qualitative meaning and their means of achieving that, the two arts are alike in essential features and, as such, are well able to serve the purpose of making a rewarding comparison.

This essay will deal with a particular aspect of the qualitative relationship between the arts of music and painting—the aspect of structural motifs—which will be explored through two works. For the moment, however, we shall examine the general character of the kinship and differences between these arts more closely in order to establish the specific basis on which this comparison may be made.

Each medium, as we know, uses a single, separate sense channel through which it is registered by us. Because the two media represent different categories of sense experience, each has its own "law" of relationships—*i.e.*, each is related internally on the basis of its own form of perceptibility. Music, as an auditory art, consists, by necessity, of a progression of sounds in time: certain notes or groups of notes occur and then are replaced by others in patterns that repeat and change until the piece of music ends. Without this temporal aspect to the organization, music could exist as nothing but a chaos of noise. As it is, time provides a spontaneous and natural organizing framework, the container, so to speak, for the composer's work—in the metaphor of our comparison, the canvas on which he displays his sounds. Painting, on the other hand, makes no special use of time; a picture cannot be divided into the segments of beginning, middle and end of the sort that a sequential presentation entails. Instead, it is contained by, organized on the basis of, a spatial boundary—the shape and size of the canvas within which occur all the patterns a flat surface may be made to bear; and, although the viewer is

perhaps led to see in sequence the different parts of the painting's area, the painting itself is, at any given moment, completely before him.

So we have two media with a basic expressive kinship but with striking contrasts in their manifested identities. The different significance of time as against a concrete dimension to the expressive relationships which may be built out of the material of each—one ultimately existing on a single plane and the other flowing in temporal sequence—naturally looms large, for it represents the physical dissimilarity of the organizational framework necessitated by the nature of the particular medium—the “law” of relationships mentioned above. It does not, however, negate the likeness of the *forms* of the relationships—for instance, rhythmic patterning, which both color and sound may achieve; transitions made by linear sequences, staccato jumps, modulated tonalities, terse contrasts; unifying harmonics and varying dissonances; balanced juxtapositioning of a volume or of a unit of sound and its counterpart, space or interval of silence; the pace of interior movement, etc.—by which the expressive qualities (*e.g.*, power, lyricism, drama, grace), also common to both, are achieved.

The above more or less indicates the general ground on which such divergent arts as music and painting may be compared and the character of the limitations inherent in the exclusiveness of their respective sensory actuality. In specific application, what we should discover of significance about the given works would, of course, be governed by the point of view we brought to bear. To illustrate, let us consider Schubert's “Piano Sonata in A Minor,” Op. 42 (see Plate 20 for reference), and Cézanne's “Leda and the Swan” (Plate 21), comparing them in terms of the structure of their basic material.

Structure is the “how” of the relationships established between the means, whether those means be sound, color or, indeed, any of the materials out of which a creative statement is fashioned. The two basic principles to which structure as functional to expression in a work of art must be referred are the principles of unity and variety—by the former of which we mean the “oneness” of a piece, the fact

of its being ultimately singular and internally complete in meaning, and by the latter, the diversity of elements making up any perceivable entity and lending interest of content to it over which that unity reigns. When, therefore, we consider the structure of the two works of Schubert and Cézanne, we shall be concerned with their incorporation of plastic devices (specific *types* of relationships among the elements) for the achievement of unity—devices which differ in their sensuous substance but which, as we have already implied, are one and the same in their mechanism, hence in their general effects.

The sonata form is made of three or four distinct sections or movements, each movement having one or more themes that are developed and varied during its course; the sonata's character grows from the thematic and harmonic development and the repetition and resolution that link the separate movements, as well as the material within each movement, into a coherent, unified whole. A painting, likewise, consists of a number of possible visual themes—*e.g.*, patterns of color and shape, linear sequences, light and dark contrasts, volume-space distinctions—united by repetition and resolution of aroused expectations. In both instances of the Cézanne and the Schubert, unity is first of all directly and simply served by the primary matter of each work: for the Op. 42, the A minor scale acts as the base of all four movements, providing a constant tonal ambience that binds the various melodies and chordal sequences, the harmonic digressions, the loud-soft contrasts, the dramatic shifts of tempo and pitch, etc., together; this pervasive tonality is matched in the Cézanne painting by an omnipresent leaden-blue color, which likewise functions as the fundamental source of all the subsidiary elements of highlight, shadow, curving, angular and straight line, volume and space and of attending effects of dramatic contrast, weighty power, density, and so on, that the elements together express.

Also in this overall view of the character of the two works, we can note the prevailing rhythmic presence of each piece—its particular patterns of existence in time, its measured intervals across the area of the canvas—which, pervasive as it is, acts similarly for both as an efficient and

expressive factor of unity in the identity of the whole: for example, in the Schubert the first movement is in 4/4 rhythm; it is neither fast nor slow, and the chords are to be held variously for one, two or three beats, resulting in a firm, steady framework in the rhythmic patterns that permits the motifs their bizarre character and the harmonic clusters to ring out in their crescendos clearly and firmly. The Cézanne, too, is couched in a framework of regularly measured "beats" of highlighted and shadowed areas, areas which one could call foursquare—broad, plain and uncluttered; so, also, does this provide a stable setting for Cézanne's exploration of linear themes, of contrasts, of volumes twisting and curving, all with a dramatic intensity of a magnitude possible only because of the immense control this rhythmic regularity exercises in conjunction with the pervasive color tonality.

In Schubert, the time shifts from the basic 4/4 to 3/8, 3/4 and 2/4 rhythm, each of which serves a function subservient to the initial rhythm: the 3/8 partakes more literally of the actual character of the melody; the 3/4 reflects the direct dramatic quality of the succession of chords; and the 2/4 compresses the original 4/4 rhythm and lends a dynamic force of tempo that is part of the flow to resolution of the work in its entirety. The counterparts for these digressive studies of the elements—the melodic line and the chordal series, respectively—and their resolution with heightened drama of the rhythmic scheme are to be found in Cézanne in a four-fold treatment of movement in the linear and space-volume components of the picture—its slow, long, shallowly convex and concave bowing and angular areas of background space and the couch and pillow units; its compressed incidence in short, abrupt rhythmic curves and angles in the breasts, the head, the hands, the undulating hair and arms and legs, the curving wings and head of the swan, etc.; equally, the quick, bold rhythms of the faceted volumes, projecting, forcefully static and immobile; and, finally, the overwhelming resolution of all these meters effected by the large rhythm of the figure itself as it turns in space and volume across the canvas and is joined with the swan in a massive, undulating counter curve.

These primary working devices, the use of a particular color or sound as a unifying mechanism and the basic simplicity of the rhythmic tempo, dispose the respective pieces to the expression of a positive sense of restraint, an unadorned naturalness and a relative straightforwardness. Each artist followed through the initial impact in his own way and to his own meaning, providing, however, along the way many more instances of parallel treatment of their various content. If we step back from the general traits and enter the Schubert more cautiously to find what is there at its onset, we immediately encounter a unit of sound containing the principal features of which the sonata is composed—a unit made of a short, simple melodic line, slightly askew in rhythm and note sequence, arriving by way of a quick double arc from the above C to middle E (the left hand duplicating this sequence an octave below), upon which it rests, followed by a series of grouped chords, regular in beat, abutting the preceding linear unit as vertical clusters, persistent, vigorous and firm in their contrast to the melodic idea. Likewise with the Cézanne, if we enter from the upper left edge of the picture, we move immediately from the straight side of the canvas onto the curved, arching, downward band of the swan's wing and directly into the deep, swooping movement of the neck—a curving “melody” line sharing with Schubert's both the lack of hesitancy in stating the fundamental linear idea of the work as a whole and in setting that idea in the general context in which we shall continue to find it; that context in the Schubert is the contrasting vertical chord clusters mentioned above, solid, firm and weighty and echoing in their venture to resolution the brevity of the melodic line; in Cézanne, the same terse linear curve also has its solid, stabilizing context—the heavy, dense, contained volumes of the swan's wing, the couch, the pillow and the volumes of the figure. Both works, then, share in partaking of a simple two-piece element out of which they are constructed—a short, dramatic linear arc and a contrasting series of solid, single units, namely, chords and volumes. And, again, this use of materials emphasizes the direct simplicity of both statements, albeit the ultimate nature of that simplicity differs.

Continuing into the two pieces, we find, also, that the

methods of disposing these introductory units bear a close kinship to one another. Each artist, while retaining the unit's initial character of terseness and restraint and the dramatic sense of contrast of the more or less sharply articulated linear element against the solid, blocky counterpart of chord or volume, varies its pace, its depth, alternately shortens and prolongs its extension, elevates and diminishes its intensity and gives it twists of surprise that refresh and maintain our interest in it despite its omnipresent recurrence. In the Schubert, for example, we find the motif taken through a series of loud-soft, legato-staccato contrasts; it is attenuated to include in a single turn an elevation to a peak of crescendo followed by a sudden return to *piano* and a new achievement of the peak, and it recurs in a multiple manner through a single, extended rise of crescendo and slow, delicate descent; the melodic unison theme is variously alternated with the chordal pattern, a sequence broken into on occasion by a surprising momentary shift, such as that late in the first movement and, again, in the middle of the fourth, to the A major key or that in the midst of the second movement into the neighboring key of E flat. These notes of surprise have their parallel in Cézanne's use of color accents—for example, the strong yellow of the swan's beak, the yellow tassel, the hair, the intense blue in the pillow and the dark of eyes, lips, and navel—which serve Cézanne's work, like Schubert's elements serve his, by increasing and intensifying the on-going drama. Further like Schubert, in the Cézanne we may see a comparably simple set of contrasts, here in the areas which alternate between light and dark, warm and cool, large and small. Also, the "melodic" theme stated in the swan's neck is, as we noted of Schubert's theme, taken through various settings: for example, it is conspicuously restated on the right side in the arm and thumb-finger "beak," now shortened in length, invested with a restrained angularity and boldly silhouetted against the blue pillow, so that it says not so much the drama of static curve said in the neck version as it does drama of striking color contrast; the theme continues to recur in less obvious units—the curve of the calf ending in the "beak" of the toes, the narrow cloth draped over the figure, the tresses of hair—each of which

echoes the others, echoes, too, the large version of the theme embodied in the figure itself and in the inclusive figure-swan unit, at the same time bringing to that theme the new meanings of its contextual identity.

The manner of varying material, practiced by both men, is, in short, primarily a matter of structural relationships: the means are limited—a dominating color, a dominating sound; a pervasive linear-volume idea, a pervasive melodic-chordal idea—and they are further restrained in their presentation through the relatively stable, standardized rhythm, a rhythm varied in pace rather than kind, and a simple set of contrasts, all repeated throughout with variations of degree and placement rather than variations of the substance of which they are composed; for example, in the Cézanne, the swan's neck-head theme, an important unifying factor for the picture, is not so much changed as broken into pieces and diversified as it is repeated; note the mirroring of the neck curve by the curve of the adjacent wing; this wing curve, in its broad simplicity much like the first unison phrase of the Schubert, carries through the hip, the abdomen, the shoulder, the top of the head, the back wing of the swan and the upper back of the pillow, and, while it is varied in extension, degree of angularity and heaviness and while in each of its episodes it belongs irrevocably to a specific unit and context, so singular is its quality in all these occurrences that the neck-head motif might almost be taken for a template for the rest of the curves of the picture. Furthermore, the mirroring rhythm of these curves is found also between the upper hip and elbow, the two bands of the cloth draping the figure, the outline of the breasts, the head and hair of the figure and the inner wing of the swan, the two "wings" made by the wave of hair on the right, and so forth. Not only is the motif itself repeated but its function, too, in that it serves each time to lock in, to hold with rigid force, the areas of volume and intervals of space within, thereby imparting a unity of expressive quality along with the unity of physical scheme, and doing so with the utmost economy of means. Similarly, in the Schubert the unison theme of the melodic line is distributed through the piece to temper, relieve and counter the dominating vertical chordal patterns, much in the way that

the curves in the Cézanne offer relief to the angular volumes that dominate the picture; its recurrence is also lent variety by changing its context or the note on which it starts or by drawing it out, all without changing its essential character, and it likewise functions to bracket, to contain and set off the vertical harmonic clusters with which it is alternately contrasted. These chordal patterns recall the parallel patches in the Cézanne that build up the weighty volumes contained within the linear undulations and that by their patterning also bridge the linear separations and work to bind the total picture together. In Schubert, too, the insistent repetition of the chordal patterns helps to bind the sonata into a single entity; after controlling the thematic material in the first movement, they are carried on through the second, here, however, as gentle enrichment of the now dominating melodic theme, emerging once again in the third as a fully dramatic contrasting element. These two latter movements retrace, extend and elaborate the material presented in the first, again, not by changing the basic nature of the elements but by exploring the possibilities of changes in tempo and in contrasts of loud-soft, opened-closed, short-long and major-minor. The fourth movement is constructed on the initial melodic theme with particular stress on its undulation, now enriched by the rhythmic patterns and harmonic sequences developed in the second and third movements; in effect, it is the swan's-neck quality pronounced, woven broadly through what might be called the background, pushing onto our attention the now emphasized blockiness and angularity of the chords. The result is a strange, compelling dramatic power.

In making these comparisons we are, like the child with the peach and the tennis ball, intent upon discovering what the objects are and how they may serve our interest. We are not in this instance—unlike the child who was concerned with whether the round object belonged to the category of food or plaything—interested in whether the works we compared affected our eyes or ears, *i.e.*, not whether they belonged to the category of painting or music; but now—as the child at another time, perhaps turned scientist, engrossed in one of the features that gave rise to the possibility of equating

the two objects (for example, the spherical shape)—we are interested in particular manifestations of structure, in seeing how those plastic devices of relationship function and qualify the expressive character of the two quite different forms of art. As a result, we are able to see in a new way, with fuller comprehension because with more significant associations, the identity of each of the works.

Structure, as we noted earlier, refers to the “how” of relationships and, therefore, is reflective of the artist’s approach to the handling of his means: in this case, we observed that both men placed severe restrictions on the thematic material they chose and both limited the variations that the thematic material undergoes so that they could maintain a clarity and firmness within their drama; both employed an unconventional plastic element to unify their statements—leaden-blue color for Cézanne, the A minor sound for Schubert; both by this gain a sober strangeness, and, to keep it all under control as they created it, they fit the work together by means of the small contrasting units that give a kinship to the structural framework of the two pieces.

If, then, we pay heed to that primary physical difference of the media and consider the means in terms of their internal structuring, our parallel yields a new perspective on the nature of the units which make up the substance of each work and on the expressive meanings the basic devices of rhythm and contrast are made to support in its presentation: the static vivacity got by pitting the curvilinear against the mass element; the character of intensity imparted by the economical use of means; the achievement of a complexity through the multiple variations imposed upon the basic “melody” and chordal-volume units that, because of the pervasive use of those units, is specifically dynamic and forceful rather than rich and overflowing; and, because the variations are multiple in degree rather than kind—contrasts more or less simply dramatic, rhythms more or less terse, rapid, massive in content—the effect of a positive strength, a sense of utterly exploring the possibilities of the material used. And when we apprehend this, when we establish a legitimate ground for comparison between different things, we then, in effect, make one a simile or metaphor for the

other, a metaphor that captures something of its identity sayable in no other terms: the Schubert-like chords of volume in the Cézanne; the Cézannesque curves of Schubert's melody.

At the same time, however, it should be noted that the features selected do not by any means account for the totality of each man's work. Both artists, of course, had different goals. Schubert, for all his use of Beethoven's ideas to augment his power, retains his native fluidity that is in striking contrast to Cézanne's stiff, static rigidity. In Cézanne's painting, the intensity, dynamism, force are of the weightiness and solidity of his volumes, the stark power of his angular, terse rhythms, the deep drama of his color contrasts, and so on, and, were we to study Cézanne's expressive content *per se* in terms of a musical parallel, we would probably find more to the purpose in Beethoven or Bach than in Schubert. In Schubert's sonata, on the other hand, the dynamism, force and intensity serve to qualify, to lend power and dramatic depth to a lean, crisp, yet gently sensuous, strange harmonic statement, for which perhaps Velásquez or Chardin could supply a fitting metaphor. Nevertheless, whatever comparison our interest leads us to investigate, each point of view may open a new range of associations, new metaphors which allow us richer perception. So, too, may the child grow older and discover, as a budding poet, the metaphor between the sweetness of the peach and his young lady, a metaphor which adds meaning to both sides of the equation, or, as a scientist, the relationship between the rounded shape of his tennis ball and ease of horizontal motion. Indeed, it is in this way—by searching from a point of interest into the nature of the things before us—that we bring the vast and infinitely disparate material we day by day encounter into the realm of our experience.

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PLATE 1



Soutine

Trees at Le Gourdon



Cézanne

Flowerpiece



Soutine

Woman in Blue



Modigliani

Girl in Sunday Clothes



Matisse

The Riffian



Darragh Homsey (Seven years old)

Ballerina
Private collection



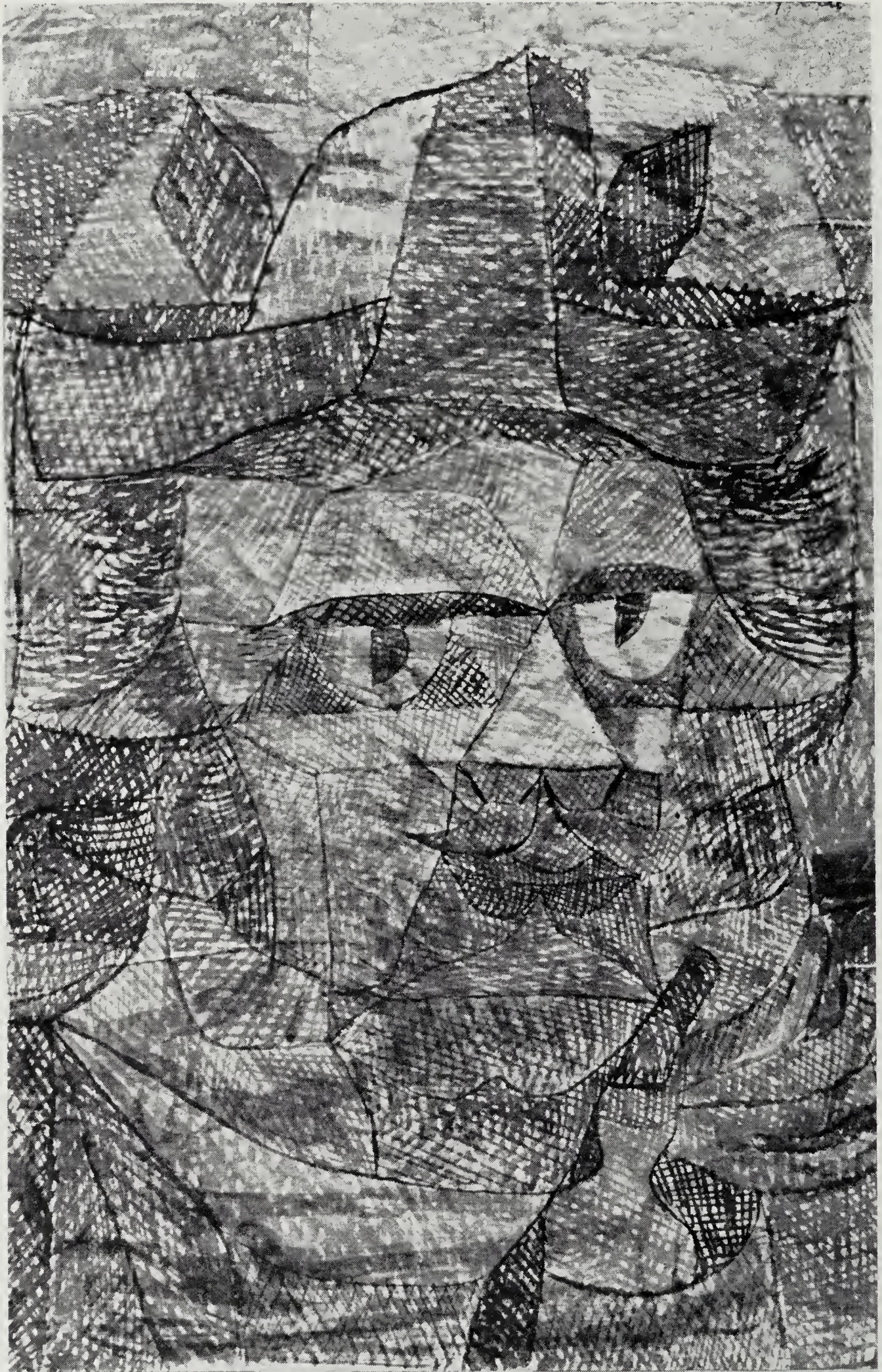
H. Rousseau

Woman with Eggs

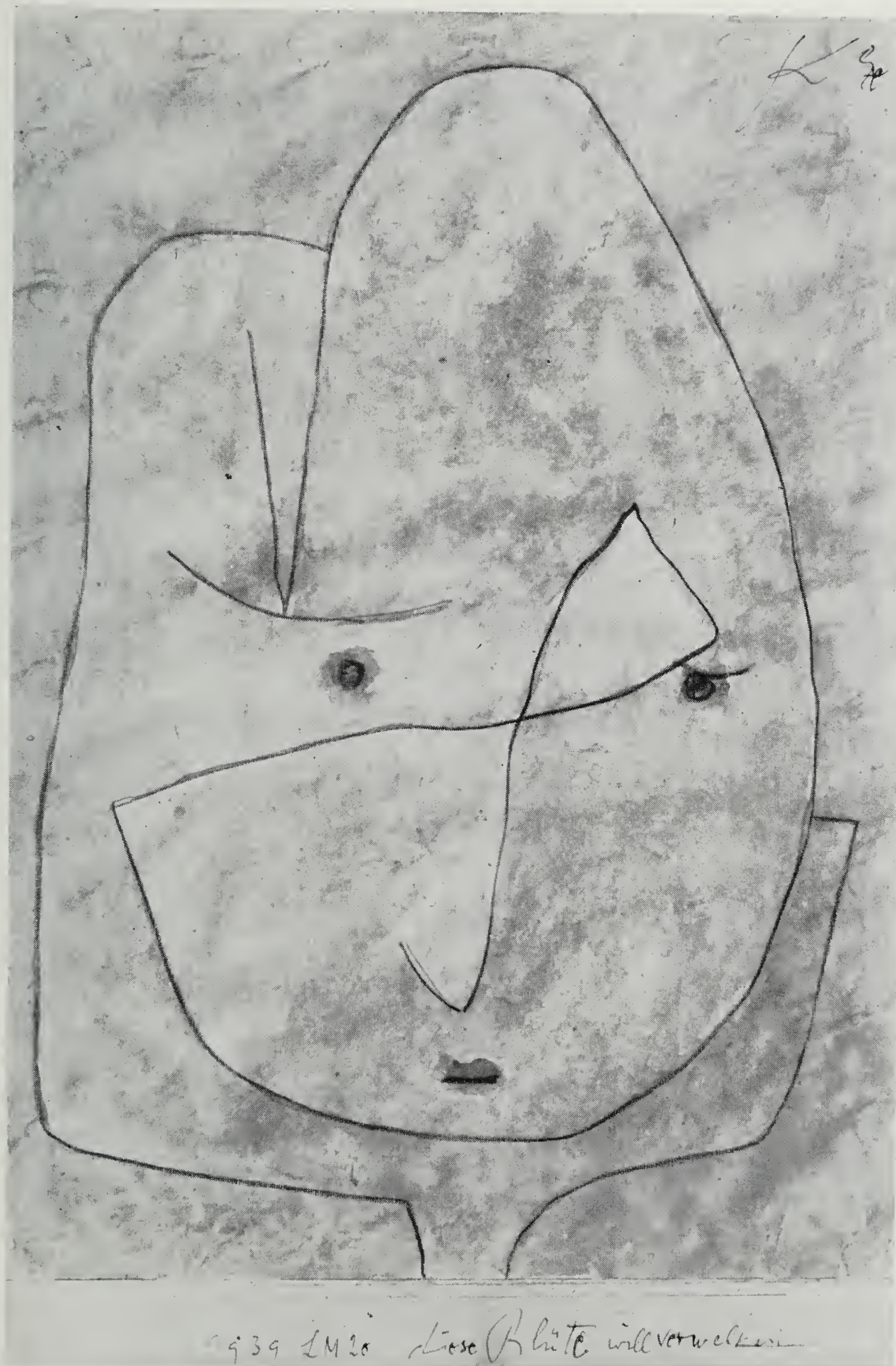


French (Nineteenth Century)

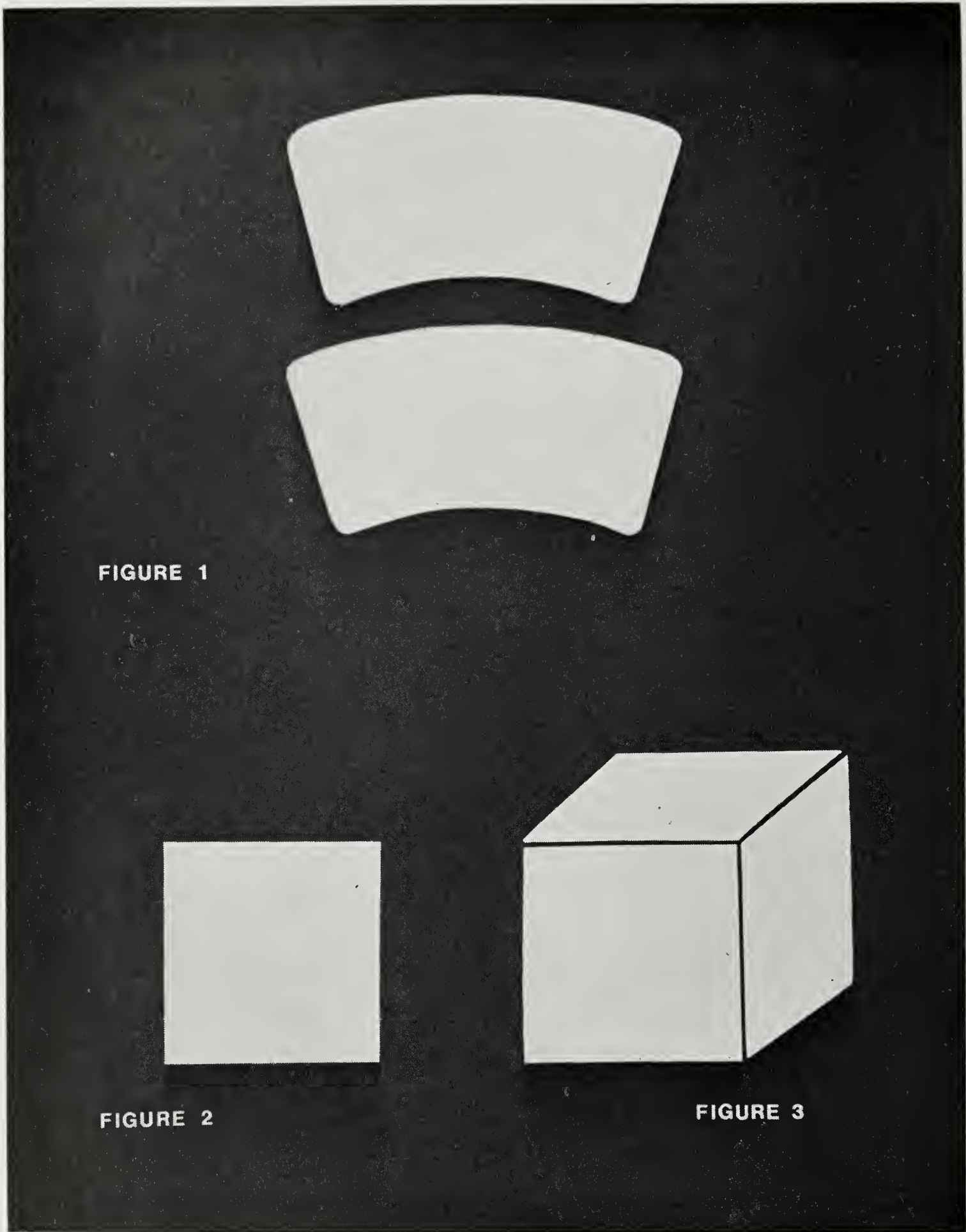
Child Holding Fruit



1932 · B1 der letzte Landsknecht



939 LM 20 Diese Blüte will verwelken

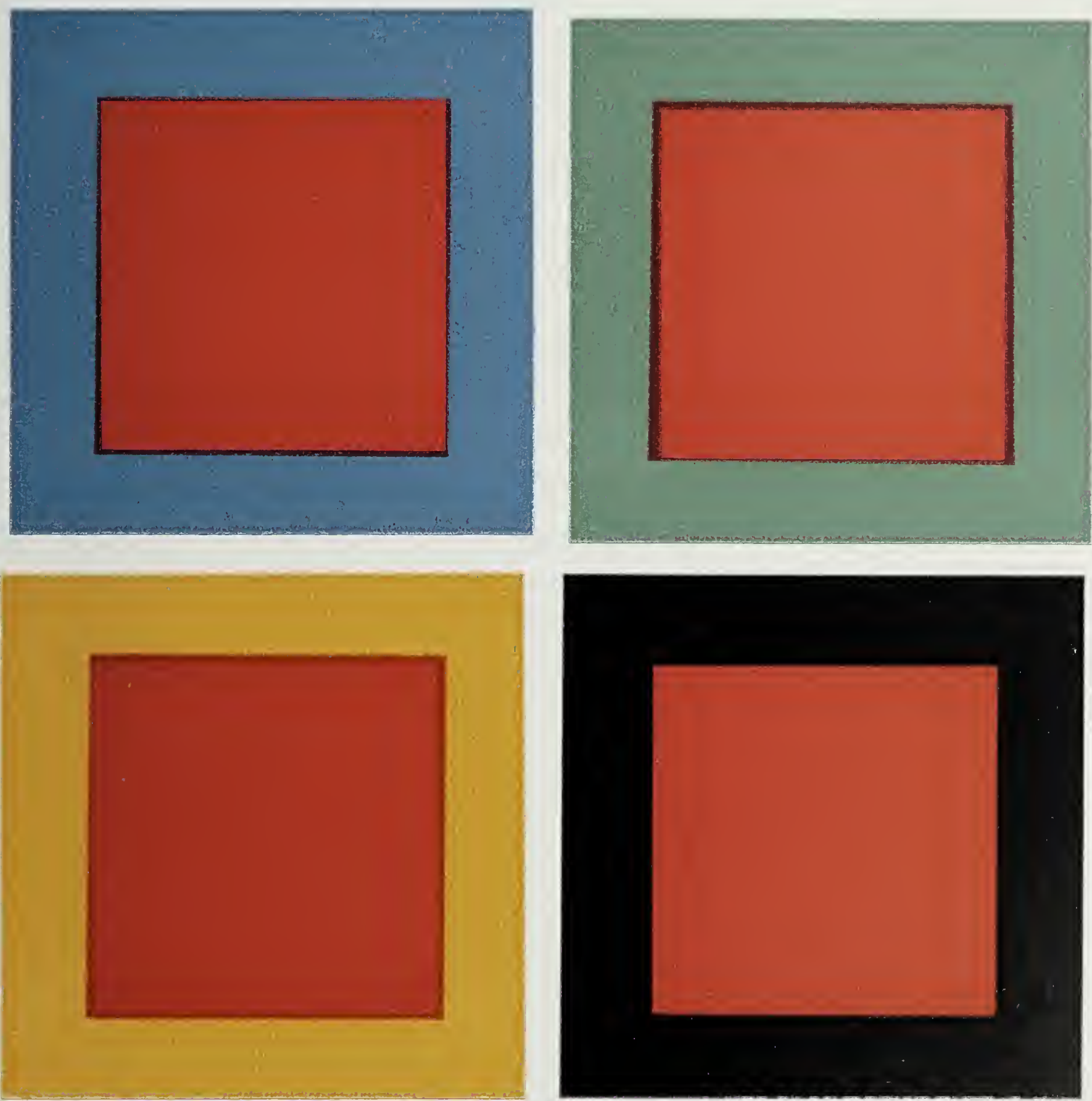


Optical illusions

PLATE 12



PLATE 12-A



Color Relationships

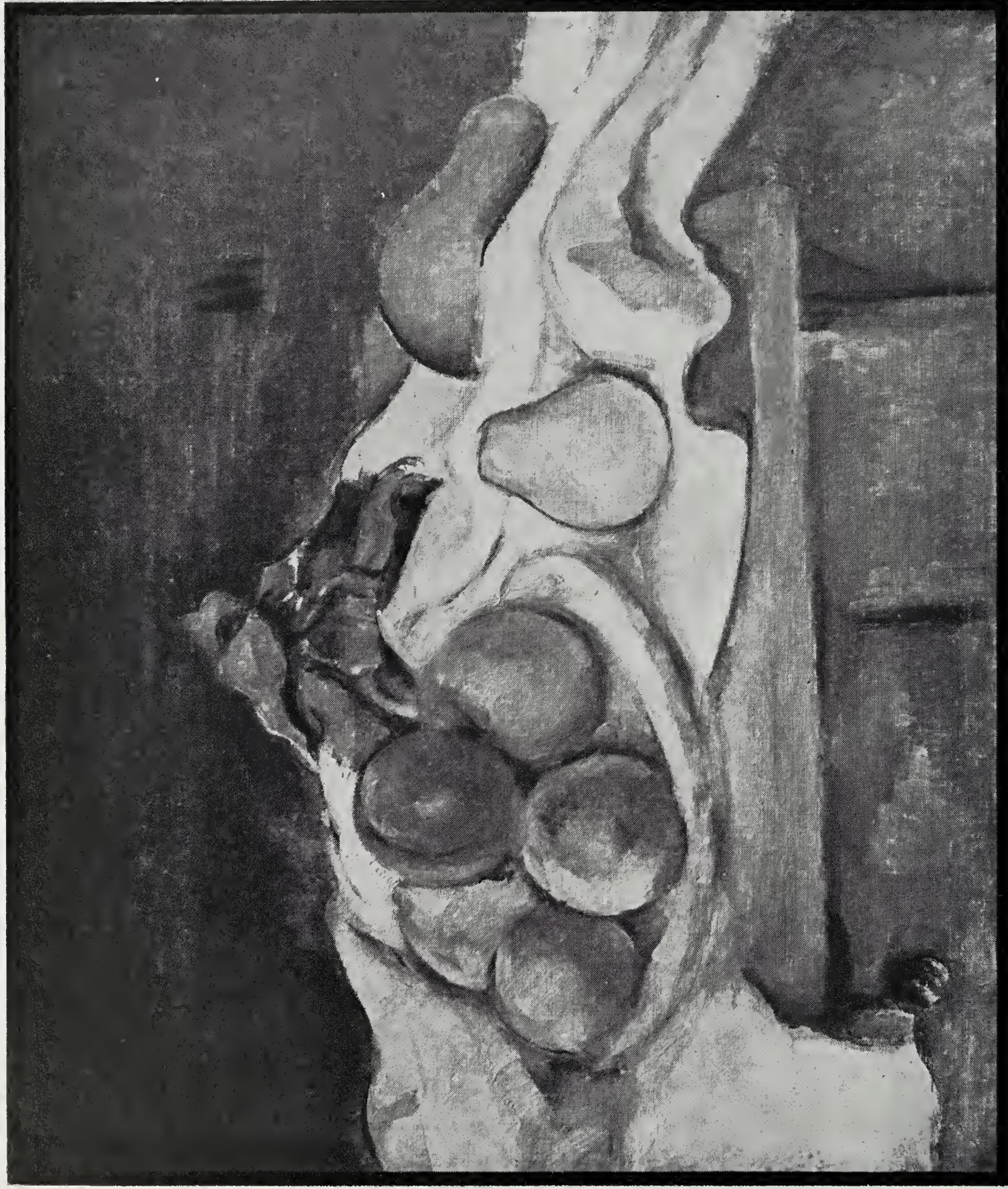


German (Fourteenth Century)

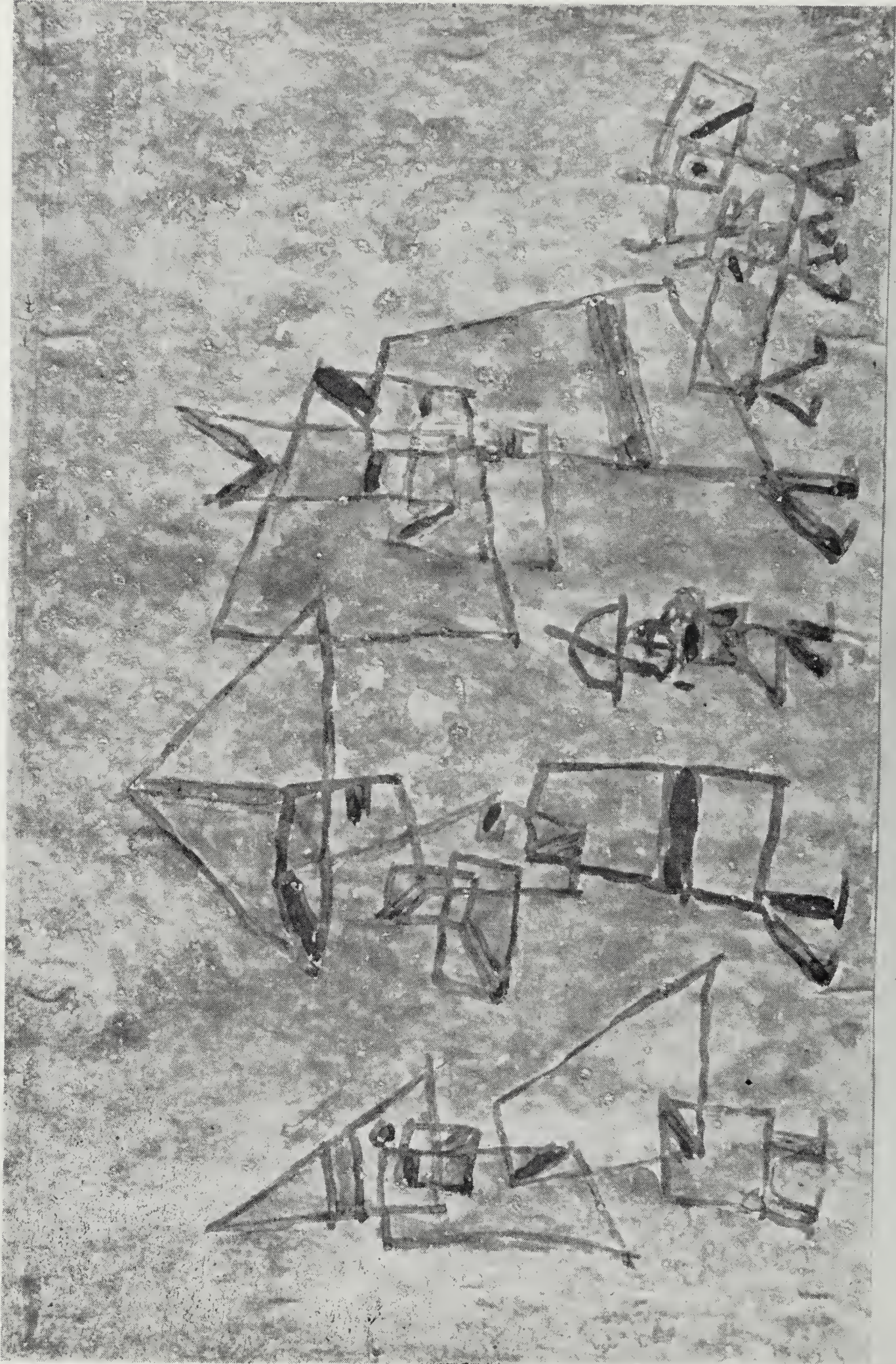
St. Catherine











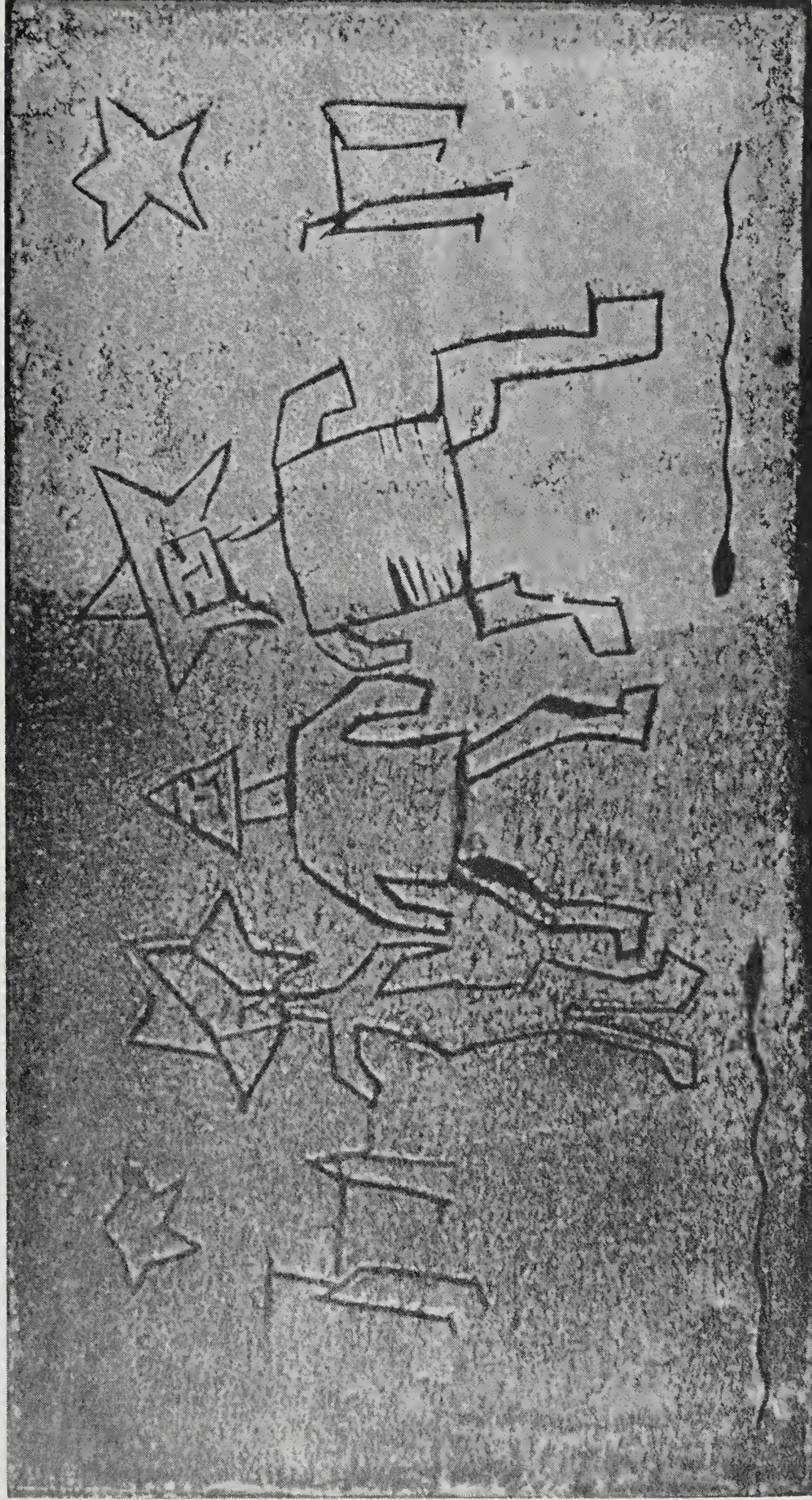
1922 u. 23

Spaziergang im Orient

Klee

Promenade in the Orient

PLATE 19



Barbara Rosenfield (Seven years old)

Parade
Private collection

Franz Schubert, Op. 42.

Excerpt from Peters Edition No. 488a, revised, of Schubert Sonatas



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